



## Norwegian Refugee Council's Covid-19 response

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting over 100 countries worldwide. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is committed to preventing and responding to the crisis among refugees, displaced persons and host communities.

### NRC programme activities

NRC is distributing information on prevention of coronavirus and providing hygiene kits, clean water and adequate toilets. We are planning ways to provide education and legal help remotely.

#### Asia, Europe and Latin America

**Afghanistan:** NRC has ramped up our information dissemination and awareness raising activities to inform displaced families living in settlements of the risks associated with coronavirus. NRC is also present at critical border crossings with Iran and Pakistan providing information in settlements.

**Bangladesh:** The humanitarian community including NRC have developed a response plan with the following core principles: a) non-discrimination and respect for human dignity, b) engagement of communities in the response and c) ensuring continuing needs of the Rohingya and host community populations are met. In addition, hygiene promotion has been stepped up in the camps, and information about the virus is being shared through diverse communication channels.

**Iran:** NRC has distributed soaps and information leaflets to raise awareness on preventive measures among 6,000 households in the settlements

throughout various provinces. We are also preparing for the distribution of 1,600 hygiene kits to families.

#### Central West Africa

**Burkina Faso:** NRC has put in place handwashing facilities at distribution points, encouraging families to scale-up handwashing practices, and working awareness raising through printed information on prevention.

**Mali:** Handwashing and provision of sanitizers has been included in all ongoing NRC activities. Staff are requested to practice social distancing and respect government restrictions on social gatherings.

**Nigeria:** Although NRC's area of operation is not yet affected by the outbreak, additional WASH kits have been procured and contingency plans are developed as part of the preparedness work.

**Cameroon:** NRC is including hygiene promotion in all ongoing activities as well as sensitization at the beginning of meetings and outreach to communities. Through advocacy we are also working to make sure UNHAS has the necessary capacity to maintain connections to areas of operation from Yaoundé, and for airports to allow humanitarian personnel in and out of the country.

**Central African Republic:** Through ongoing advocacy efforts, NRC is trying to ensure that medical evacuations are kept open for staff as a measure to provide the basic security for staff who chose to stay and deliver in a context where health facilities are as good as inexistent.

**DR Congo:** Ongoing advocacy effort to make sure that mistakes of coordination in the Ebola response are not repeated in the set-up of a corona-response.

### East Africa and Yemen

**Somalia:** NRC is reprogramming 1,13million USD to construct handwashing basins, soap distribution and awareness campaign in targeted IDP settlements.

**Uganda:** NRC is expanding existing programmes in Water Sanitation and Hygiene in refugee settlements.

**South Sudan:** NRC is scaling- up distribution of hygiene kits and soap alongside food distribution. We are also developing new ways to avoid crowding at food distribution sites.

**Kenya:** NRC is working to ensure the continuity of water supply in Kakuma refugee camp.

### Middle East

**Iraq:** NRC is mainstreaming water, sanitation and hygiene elements to our other core competencies. Within its livelihoods programme, NRC will use mobile transfer agents to provide vital cash inputs. In addition, NRC will establish a number of focused call centres to provide information on humanitarian services that are available, health service providers and contact details, official movement restrictions and suspended governmental services.

**Jordan:** NRC has continued to provide in-person essential services in Zaatari and Azraq refugee camps through staff who have been sleeping over in the camps. These services will be scaled up in the coming days, starting with a cash distribution in Azraq on 28 March and one in Zaatari soon to follow. NRC has introduced, to both staff and the people we serve, preventative measures such as sanitation, limiting person-to-person contact, temperature check and raising awareness about personal hygiene and other measures to combat the spread of coronavirus. NRC is also looking to distribute hygiene kits and provide hygiene messages through leaflets or phone calls to host communities.

**Lebanon:** NRC is sharing key messages on water, sanitation and hygiene to our other core competencies, distributing soap and increasing water trucking activities. We are also delivering urgent legal and civic documentation such as birth registrations over 12 months, detentions and deportations documents and will continue to monitor the situation in refugee communities through Information Focal Point networks. NRC's protection team will compile regular updates concerning the impact of the coronavirus and shelter teams are ready to assist protection cases and relocating families with protection concerns in housing units where possible.

**Libya:** With the first case of coronavirus confirmed in Libya on 25 March, and heavy movement restrictions in place, NRC are continuing to implement programmes remotely where possible, with key hygiene messages being incorporated to other core competencies. We are also seeking to develop distance learning modules for IDP children. NRC continues to carry out legal counselling and service mappings over the phone. A cash distribution for vulnerable Libyan IDPs and migrants is also planned in the coming weeks.

**Palestine:** In both Gaza and the West Bank, NRC is on standby to provide support to the authorities with their coronavirus response and is currently working closely in relevant clusters to ensure coherent planning from the humanitarian community. Given the key importance of NRC's BLP programming in Palestine, NRC is working on PSS messaging which can be delivered through digital means.

**Syria:** Over the last week, NRC has continued to keep in contact with the relevant WASH working group to coordinate the response. While shelter activities (rehabilitation) are still on-going, precautionary measures have been taken to contain the spread. Currently, NRC is rehabilitating a medical centre in Aleppo. This work is planned to be completed by mid-April so the centre can be handed over to local authorities and used to respond to the potential outbreak.

### NORCAP

NORCAP is one of few partners still deploying people and working on new ways to support partners remotely, as well as deploying experts in their home countries. Approximately 300 experts continue to support UN agencies, international organisations

and national partners in adapting their response to the coronavirus and to ensure continuity of vital services to people in need.

Experts have distributed protective equipment to WHO health personnel on the frontlines and set up handwashing and other hygiene facilities. They are informing people in refugee camps about the virus and how to prevent spreading it and education experts restructure education programmes to ensure distance learning for children. Cash specialists ramp up payments to make sure they cover the next 2-3 months instead of monthly payments, spreading out distribution dates to avoid congestions and helping vulnerable communities prepare for future uncertainties.

[ACAPS produces global analysis on the coronavirus pandemic](#), providing a broad overview of the overall situation, as well as context-specific analysis on regions, countries and crisis hot spots.

## **NRC advocacy and media activities**

**Raising awareness:** A coronavirus outbreak among displaced populations will potentially have devastating effects and it is important that governments pay attention also to the displaced populations within their borders. On 16 March, NRC issued a [public statement](#) by Secretary General Jan Egeland urging world leaders to not abandon refugees and displaced communities and for states to include displaced people in their contingency planning and response. The statement was picked up widely by international media such as AFP, France24, VG, The Guardian and BBC World Service. Thomson Reuters published an [opinion piece](#) by Egeland on how the coronavirus is hitting the world's displaced hardest.

NRC also highlighted how vulnerable Yemen would be to [a potential outbreak](#).

Egeland and other NRC staff continue to do daily interviews and reiterating NRC's messages to world media including BBC World Service, Financial Times, ABC, NBC and Al Jazeera. Egeland's quotes have also been picked up by The Washington Post and CNN among other outlets.

**Humanitarian exemptions to travel restrictions:** As more and more governments are imposing measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus, travel restrictions are also inadvertently preventing NRC and other humanitarian actors from providing critical humanitarian assistance. On 25 March, NRC issued a [press release](#) calling on governments to wave travel restrictions for humanitarian workers to ensure continuation of critical programmes and scale-up of relevant activities. The press release has been picked up by AP so far.

**Donor flexibility:** NRC has also conducted active advocacy efforts towards key donors to ensure that we have the flexibility to respond appropriately and quickly to the crisis. These efforts included a private letter to key donors on March 16, informing them of how NRC is responding to the crisis and asking for flexibility in terms of reallocation of funding.

NRC joined the five largest aid organisations in Norway in issuing a letter to the Norwegian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister urging an increase in aid to fight coronavirus. The statement was picked up by national media such as NTB, NRK and Dagsavisen.