



## The United Nations & COVID-19 Global Health Emergency August 2021 Update

Secretary-General Guterres stated, “COVID-19 is the greatest test” since World War II; “it is more than a health crisis. It is a human crisis.” The UN chief [released a plan](#) to counter COVID-19, which emphasizes the need for countries to act in concert and outlines ways to suppress transmission of the virus, safeguard people’s lives and their livelihoods, and learn from the crisis to build back.

**Provided below is a snapshot of UN efforts overseas to combat COVID-19. This edition includes information on the successful launch of the first COVID-19 vaccination drive for Rohingya refugees and the delivery of over 15,000 kgs of medical equipment to Fiji via the WFP-managed Pacific Humanitarian Air Service.**

This reference document is by no means comprehensive of all the UN’s work; it is meant to illustrate the various ways the “UN Family” confronts a global pandemic, based on both its past actions and new methods. This document will be updated regularly but please reach out if you have any questions. For further background, the United Nations has also developed a [resource](#) to monitor the latest updates.

### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

- **On Aug. 11, over 4,000 Rohingya refugees living in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh received their first COVID-19 vaccine doses, as part of a national vaccination drive to curb the spread of the virus.**

Nearly 50,000 Rohingya refugees over the age of 55 were eligible for vaccination in the first phase of the campaign, which is being led by the Bangladesh authorities with technical support from UNHCR, WHO, and other humanitarian partners. The fight against the pandemic has been led by thousands of refugee and host community volunteers, who have worked since 2020 on informing refugees about health and hygiene, monitoring any signs of illness, and connecting the community with health services.



*Photo: UNHCR. Mohammed Shofi, 64 years old, receives the first dose of his COVID-19 vaccination. He was the first Rohingya refugee to be vaccinated against the coronavirus in the Cox’s Bazar camps in Bangladesh.*

### UNFPA

- The EU and UNFPA have joined efforts to provide gender-responsive emergency support to address the COVID-19 aftermath and strengthen gender equality in Ukraine within its flagship programme ‘WE ACT: Women Empowerment Action’. **The 18-month programme**



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is aimed to protect women from gender-based violence (GBV), remove barriers for women’s leadership, and support female frontline healthcare responders to COVID-19. “COVID-19 revealed the essential roles that women play in society: as leaders, as entrepreneurs, as frontline healthcare workers, as trusted community leaders. But it also revealed the fragility of a social construct that depends on women performing multiple and often underpaid, invisible roles. It also puts women and girls at higher risk of suffering from violence, limiting their bodily autonomy and their access to basic public services such as health, education and social protection. WE ACT Programme streamed to the most affected aspects to ensure women’s security, wellbeing and opportunities”, Jaime Nadal, UNFPA Representative in Ukraine, said.

## **UNICEF**

- **UNICEF announced on Aug. 13 that it will support Libya's newly-launched “exceptional” vaccination campaign against COVID-19.** UNICEF will be supporting the campaign through the provision of cold chain equipment, which includes cold boxes and vaccine carriers, quality monitoring devices, first aid kits and personal protective equipment—in addition to improving vaccine uptake by dispelling rumors, managing infodemics, and building community trust. On the day of the announcement, Libyan Minister of Health Ali Zanati opened the largest COVID-19 vaccination center in the capital Tripoli, which was founded inside a sports complex and contains some 60 vaccination stations.

- **Somalia received 302,400 doses of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX facility on Aug. 12.** The J&J vaccines, donated by the U.S., are the first single-dose vaccines to be distributed in the country and enable additional Somalis to be fully vaccinated with one shot. Vaccination uptake in Somalia remains low, with only 93,458 Somalis fully vaccinated against the virus. UNICEF and WHO will continue supporting the federal and state ministries of health to ensure the equitable distribution of the vaccines through the management of cold chain systems; training of vaccinators to administer vaccines safely; monitoring the vaccine uptake, particularly by eligible and vulnerable populations; and encouraging the uptake of the vaccine and the continuation of the critical, life-saving preventive COVID-19 behaviors in communities.



*Photo: UNICEF. More COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Somalia through the COVAX facility last week. These vaccines will play a key role in bolstering vaccination coverage across the country.*

## **World Food Programme (WFP)**

- **The WFP-managed Pacific Humanitarian Air Service transported more than 15,000 kilograms of medical cargo on behalf of WHO from the Philippines, to Nadi, Fiji on Aug. 13.** The flight arrived with 75 oxygen concentrators and accessories, 1,000 pulse oximeters, 100,000 gowns, and 100,000 N95 masks from WHO’s Regional emergency stockpile. The supplies have been brought in at the request of Fiji’s Ministry of Health and



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Medical Services and will be used to treat COVID-19 patients, while ensuring the safety of frontline healthcare workers.

- WFP continues to use cash-based transfers to help households navigate the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. **During the first half of 2021, WFP transferred \$710 million to vulnerable people in 62 countries, five of which account for 50% of all cash assistance: Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon, Somalia and Yemen.** WFP is also helping 40 governments design and deliver their own cash-based transfer programs. In Haiti, for example, the Government chose WFP to disburse \$60 million from the Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank to 160,000 households affected by COVID-19.
- WFP is supporting the global humanitarian supply chain as the COVID-19 response continues around the world. At the request of **Nepal's** Ministry of Health, WFP provided support in procuring pharma-grade refrigerated containers. Due to the lack of viable commercial air options for vaccine transport in **Somalia**, WFP is helping UNICEF transport COVID-19 vaccines from neighboring Kenya to locations in Somalia. In **Sudan**, WFP is assisting the Ministry of Health to transport vaccines as part of their immunization campaign and delivered vaccines by road using refrigerated containers from Khartoum to locations in Darfur. In **Malawi**, WFP is constructing space to administer vaccinations in Dzaleka Refugee camp and constructed a COVID-19 field hospital in Blantyre in partnership with Médecins Sans Frontiers.

#### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

- FAO and WFP recently warned that efforts to fight a global surge in acute food insecurity are being stymied in several countries by fighting and blockades that cut off life-saving aid to families on the brink of famine. **The [report](#) highlights that conflict, climate extremes and economic shocks—often related to the economic fallout of COVID-19—will likely remain primary drivers of acute food insecurity for the August-November 2021 period.** FAO and WFP have already warned that 41 million people were at risk of falling into famine unless they received immediate food and livelihood assistance. 2020 saw 155 million people facing acute food insecurity at Crisis or worse levels in 55 countries (IPC/CH Phases 3 or worse) according to the Global Report on Food Crises, an increase of more than 20 million from 2019—and the trend is only expected to worsen this year.