



COVID-19 RESPONSE

IOM Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa
Situation Report 18 (09 – 28 December 2020)



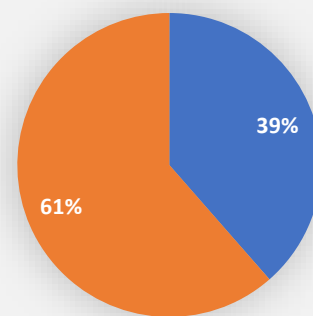
Distribution of NFIs including mattresses, hygiene kits, winter blankets and new winter clothing to over 200 migrants in Ganfouda DC, in Benghazi, ©IOM Libya

- As of **27 December 2020**, a total of **2,807,699 COVID-19 cases** have been confirmed in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, out of which **49,307 fatalities** have been reported.
- On **10 December 2020**, IOM MENA co-organized a webinar on **Expanding Universal Health Coverage among refugees and migrants: Challenges and Opportunities** together with WHO EMRO, UNHCR MENA, and UNRWA to commemorate the **Universal Health Coverage Day**. At the round table discussion, Dr. Chiaki Ito, Regional Migration Health Specialist emphasized that no one will be safe if migrants are not included in health care systems ensuring **health for all**.
- In commemoration of **International Migrant Day on 18 December 2020**, the **United Nations Network on Migration in Kuwait facilitated its first public national consultation** with non-governmental stakeholders among CSOs, media and academia. The dialogue facilitated four sub-group discussions on thematic priorities of 2021: Protection, Education, Access to Health, and Labour Market issues. The dialogue resulted in a cumulative list of recommendations and concluded with agreement to collaborate to address key issues pertaining the **socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable migrant communities**.
- The IOM Regional Office in Cairo participated in the **COVAX regional working group led by WHO and UNICEF** to coordinate support to countries in the region on COVID-19 vaccine delivery. WHO, UNICEF, and IOM agreed on the **importance of advocacy, planning, and communication on inclusion of migrants in national vaccination plans** to achieve health for all in the countries in the region.
- A series of activities took place in the week leading up to **18 December 2020** to mark International Migrants Day in Libya. IOM held events to **highlight migrants' resilience, challenges and contributions to the Libyan community during the COVID-19 pandemic**. IOM organized a film screening, three Mental Health and Psychosocial Support workshops, a cloth mask making workshop for migrant women and COVID-19 awareness-raising activities. During the events, migrants shared their experiences, challenges, hopes and contributions to the community.

IOM's appeal for the MENA region

91,360,418 USD

Funding contributions to COVID-19 to date:
35,223,847 USD, including **5.03 million USD** reprogrammed funding.



■ Funding Received
■ Funding Gap

IOM National Response Plans related to COVID-19 can also be found at [IOM's Crisis Response Site](#)

Stories from the Field

IOM supports the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Tunisia to safely receive over 400 international students amidst the COVID-19 Crisis

Tunis, Tunisia – At Carthage airport, IOM staff welcomes a new cohort of international students, who would start their university studies in different Universities in Tunisia for the 2020-2021 academic year. Each year, Tunisia offers a number of scholarships to students from various countries to pursue their university degrees in Tunisia.

As the number of international students has increased worldwide from 2 million in 2000 to 5.3 million in 2017, so has the number of international students in Tunisia. The increase reflects Tunisia's national strategy to position itself as an international hub of higher education in North Africa, offering modern and advanced curricula to increasing numbers of international students.

IOM is in close partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) through various joint projects, aiming to strengthen national capacity to attract and retain international students and widening the array of academic actors for enhanced evidence-based research on migration.

With MESRS, IOM has developed a welcome guide for international students to help them settle into their host country. IOM is also providing technical and financial support to different student-led initiatives aiming to facilitate reception and integration of international students in Tunisia.

To facilitate the safe reception of these international students during COVID-19 pandemic, IOM has provided accommodation to over 400 international students, from different countries, during the 7-day quarantine period required by national COVID-19 protocol.



International students arriving to Carthage Airport in Tunis, Tunisia. ©IOM Tunisia

For this year, following the tragic explosion in the port of Beirut, Tunisia decided to grant additional scholarships to Lebanese students as an act of solidarity with the Lebanese people, enabling them to undertake university studies in different disciplines. Ahmed*, a freshmen Bachelor's Degree student from Lebanon, was one of these students who proudly spoke about his arrival to Tunisia.

"I applied for this scholarship after the tragic incident that happened in Beirut. After some time, I was informed that I had been selected to study in the city of Sfax. I am excited to be studying in a leading university in Tunisia. I am proud of this achievement because I have always been told that Tunisian educational system is well-known, and has a strong reputation."

Reflecting on the strained political and economic situation in Lebanon, Ahmed's story confirms the complex and various driving factors that motivates mobility of international students, who seek better quality of education, the acquisition of new talents and skills, and better socio-economic perspectives in their host countries.

International scholarship demonstrates the transnational links that international students can create between their countries of origins, host countries and third countries, in which they might seek additional skills, knowledge and professional experiences. "I am convinced that I would succeed in my studies, would subsequently be able to work in many other countries. It is true that, in the end, I would come back to my country, but I believe such a decision would only be once I learn about other countries, equip myself with strong professional skills and once I have secured my future".



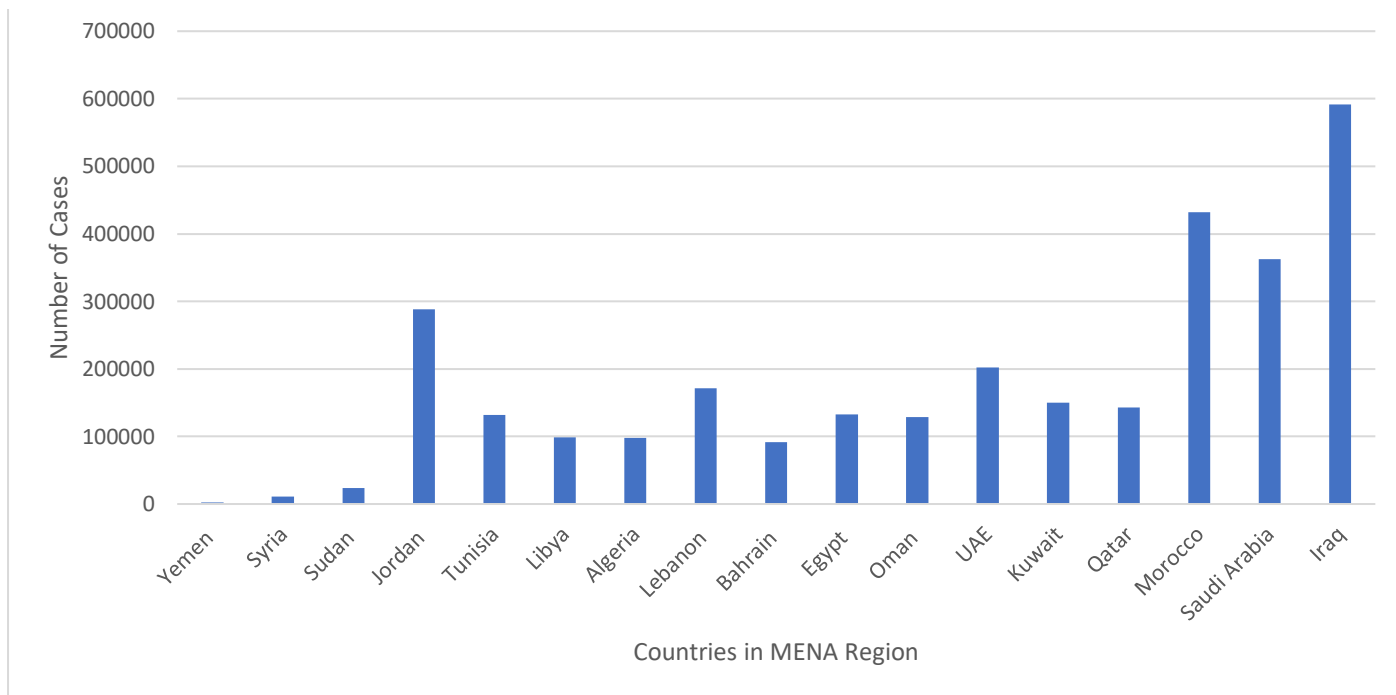
International students attending information session organized by IOM ©IOM Tunisia

After the students completed their quarantine period, IOM organized information sessions to prepare the students to settle into Tunisia. The sessions include a brief overview of the cultural, social and historical background of Tunisia along with a session on the prevention measures of COVID-19 and information on available mental and psychological support.

At the official welcome ceremony of the students, MESRS highlighted the newly-implemented strategies to adapt to the new circumstances imposed by COVID-19 and the inclusion of international students in the national response to the-19 pandemic and stressed the importance of the joint partnership with IOM.

* All names changed to protect individuals' identities

The effects and impact of COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt across the MENA region. As of 27 December 2020, a total of 3,056,642 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in the region, out of which, 53,818 cases have proven fatal. The case fatality ratio (CFR) for the region has stabilized at 1.8 per cent, which is relatively low compared to the global CFR of 2.3 per cent. The MENA region accounts for 3.8 per cent of global burden of COVID-19 cases and 3.1 per cent of global COVID-19-associated deaths. Lebanon reported the highest number of new case in the region (1,754) followed by Jordan (1,590) and Morocco (1,517). Concurrently, Yemen still has the highest CFR regionally and globally (28%).



COVID-19 Situation in MENA countries as of 27 December 2020 ©WHO

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to significantly impact regional mobility in the form of various travel bans and mobility restrictions. Some changes have been recorded in the operational status of international Points of Entry (PoEs) in the MENA region during the reporting period. To date, according to IOM’s Tracking Mobility Impact , around 54 per cent of monitored international airports are fully operational, nine (9) per cent are partially operational and 36 per cent remain fully closed. Around 31 per cent of the 106 monitored land border crossing points remain fully closed and 22 per cent are partially operational, while there are 47 land border crossing points that are now classified as fully operational. Out of 50 monitored blue border crossing points in the region, 23 of them are fully closed and 15 are partially operational, while eleven (11) blue border crossing points are fully operational for passengers.

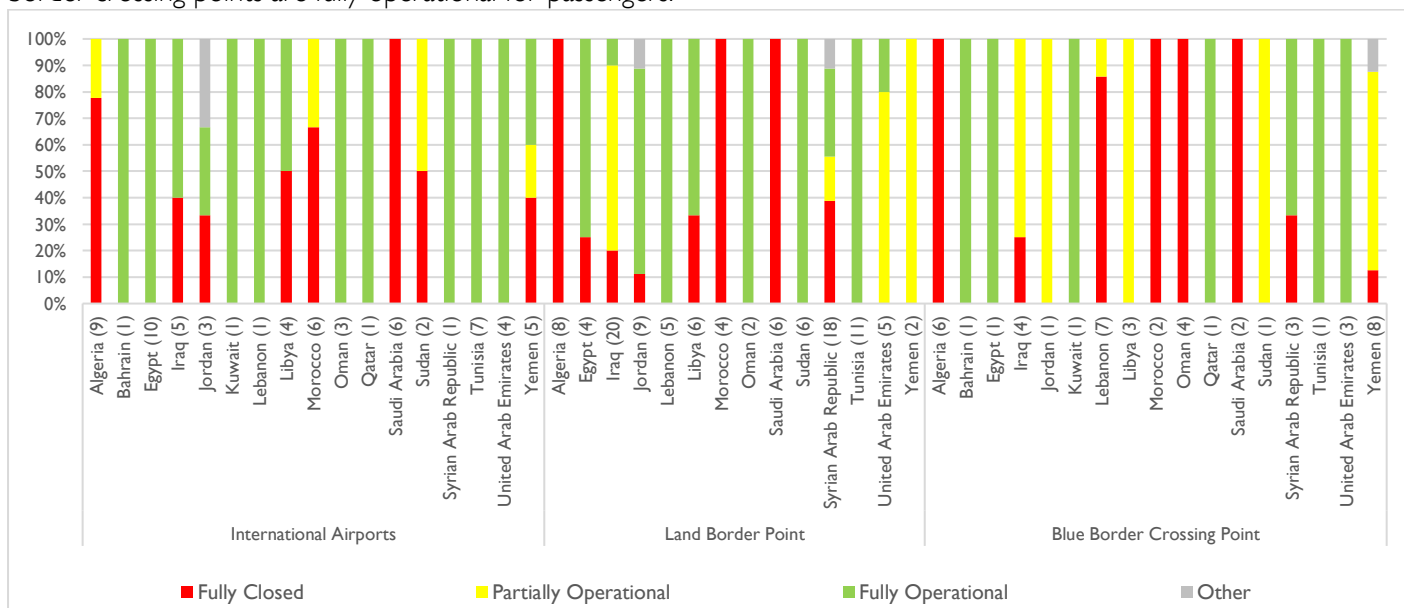


Figure 2: Operational Status of PoEs across the MENA Region ©IOM Tracking Mobility Impacts

Response

COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

On 18 December, IOM **Kuwait** along with the other members of the UN Migration Network, held the network's first public national consultation with non-governmental stakeholders among CSOs, media and academia. The dialogue facilitated four sub-group discussions on thematic priorities of 2021: Protection, Education, Access to Health, and Labour Market issues. The participants agreed on the coordination and collaboration to address socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable migrant communities, along with the other key recommendations.

RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)

IOM **Algeria** continues its digital communication campaign on COVID-19 through Facebook, focusing on prevention messages and raising awareness on the prevention measures adopted by the Algerian authorities to curb the pandemic in the country (e.g. curfew, mobility restrictions, early closure of shops).

IOM **Tunisia** is diversifying its risk communication and community engagement activities to include in-person outreach, toll-free tele-counselling for persons impacted by COVID-19 and online social media activities via Facebook to communicate information, education, and communication (IEC) materials on COVID-19. In collaboration with civil society organizations, IOM Tunisia continues to integrate critical COVID-19 awareness sessions into all of its direct assistance actions in the city of Sousse and Sfax reaching more than (700) migrants and distributing COVID-19 awareness raising posters and flyers in English, French and Arabic during these sessions.



MHPSS workshop in Tripoli, Libya ©IOM Libya

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

IOM **Libya** continues to conduct syndromic and event-based health surveillance in areas in Libya at/near PoEs in collaboration with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). A total of 876 migrants were surveyed in the reporting period.



IOM medical lab technician checking IDP patient samples in a clinic in a displacement camp in Marib, Yemen ©IOM Yemen

POINTS OF ENTRY (POE)

IOM **Iraq** conducted two-day training sessions at three Points of Entry (Erbil airport, Haj Omran ground crossing in Erbil, Ibrahim Khalil ground crossing in Dohuk). Training modules included an overview of COVID-19, introduction to public health response and international health regulations, management and referral of sick travellers, risk communication, and more. PoE health officials gave positive feedback on the training content in all sessions.

IOM **Jordan** conducted POE Needs Assessments at border crossing points (Al-Modawara POE, Aqaba Seaport Passengers station POE, Al-Durra POE) in coordination with the Ministry of Health and border authorities in order to provide support and accommodate the rapidly changing situation.

The rehabilitation of an isolation unit at the Khartoum Airport by IOM **Sudan** has been completed. Through its transition and recovery unit, our heavy-duty air-conditioning units, eight handwashing stations with associated water filling and disposal have been installed and the rehabilitation of existing handwashing areas in WC and installation of fume extraction fans will be completed by the end of 2020. In Red Sea state, IOM installed seven disinfection gates, elevated tank and provided hand washing facilities to the Port Sudan airport.

IOM **Lebanon** conducted First Aid & COVID-19 Prevention training at the Beirut Port for 75 staff, and at the Tripoli Port for 45 staff. Face masks were provided to General Security Department staff who are in charge of PoE security.

INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL (IPC)

In **Yemen**, IOM is providing water (through water trucking or vouchers), supplying family tanks and water points in more than 55 sites in Ibb, Marib and Taizz, reaching 86,619 people. During the reporting period, IOM distributed 1,872 pieces of soap and 9,972 long lasting insecticide nets in Aden and Taizz, and 3,600 hygiene kits in Aden, Abyan and Taizz.

IOM **Sudan** is improving access to WASH services and IPC measures in El-Fasher health center in North Darfur. A training of trainers on the management of water sources, sanitation facilities has been conducted and hygiene

awareness messaging for non-health workers in the area were conducted in order to ensure the implementation of effective IPC measures.

IOM **Libya** held four trainings on infection prevention and control measures for 29 Rapid Response Team (RRT) members from Gharyan and Bani Waleed (two trainings) as well as for 15 frontline health care workers from Bani Waleed public healthcare facilities and for nine IOM Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM) medical staff. IOM Libya also donated PPEs, medical consumables, and medications to National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to support the national COVID-19 Rapid Response Teams (RRTs).



IOM doctor treating an IDP in an established clinic in a displacement camp in Marib ©IOM Yemen

CASE MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUATION OF SERVICES

In Kassala, **Sudan**, IOM and Plan International are supporting five localities (Kassala, Halfa, North Delta, River Atbara, and Kassala West) to build capacity of their health service providers and enable effective diagnosis as well as timely detection of COVID-19 cases and proper management of diagnosed cases. The activities include the rehabilitation of rooms in the Kassala teaching hospital and isolation centres in Halfa and River Atbara locality. This project will also provide monetary support to hotline operators; conduct RCCE activities; organize hygiene promotion and provide hygiene kits.

IOM **Libya** donated medical equipment, medical consumables, and medications to three Primary Healthcare Centres in Benghazi, to the Bani Waleed General Hospital as well as to three hospitals in Tripoli to support the national health system in ensuring continuity of essential healthcare services during COVID-19.

In Zarsis, **Tunisia**, IOM donated personal protective equipment (PPE) to be used by regional healthcare facilities in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on local populations. The donation included 10,000 surgical masks, 500 disposable coveralls, 5,000 hand sanitizers and 100 forehead thermometers.

CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM)

The CCCM team in **Iraq** conducted awareness sessions on COVID-19 and its prevention to IDPs in informal sites in Latifiya district. The IOM team also held four hygiene

promotion sessions and COVID-19 games on 7 and 8 December 2020 (two sessions per day). The targeted participants were CCCM Empowerment group members in 20 informal sites who will replicate the activities for the other 600 households and their children living in the informal settlements.

PROTECTION

In **Yemen**, IOM Migrant and Community Response Points and mobile teams supported 3,654 migrants in Aden and Sana'a providing aid and hygiene items as well as emergency food assistance. In Aden, despite challenges presented by COVID-19, IOM continues to support 3,800 migrants who have requested Voluntary Return Assistance (VHR).

IOM **Sudan** continues its provision of emergency food support, reaching a total of 3,700 migrants from the Ethiopian, Eritrean, Filipino, Nigerian, Nigerien and Chadian communities in Khartoum and Gedaref. Food items include flour, lentils, sugar and oil. Under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Sudan, 276 returnees (63 female and 213 male) have been assisted with emergency food assistance also.

IOM **Lebanon** continues to support the voluntary return of migrant workers who have been affected by both the blast and economic impact of COVID-19 to the countries of origin, including to Ethiopia, Sudan and Sierra Leone. On 21 December 2020, an IOM-organized charter returned 145 Sudanese migrants to Sudan.

In **Tunisia**, IOM continues to offer a range of legal counselling and services to migrants in needs, in particular in the light of the socioeconomic repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic that led to the loss of jobs and incomes of many migrants. For the reporting period, 23 legal consultations have been provided to the most vulnerable beneficiaries, including women, through mediation with landlords to prevent expulsions, mediation with employee to recover unpaid salaries and court procedures to issue official documents (birth certificates, permit of stays, etc).



Distribution of NFIs including mattresses, hygiene kits, winter blankets and new winter clothing to over 200 migrants in Ganfouda Detention Centre, in Benghazi, Libya, following a thorough fumigation, disinfection and cleaning campaign ©IOM Libya

ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS

IOM **Lebanon** assisted a total of 244 stranded and vulnerable Migrant Workers with a one-off emergency multi-purpose cash assistance. IOM has assisted a total of 694 vulnerable migrants through the basic assistance programs. The IOM Needs and Vulnerability Assessment of Migrant Workers in Lebanon continued throughout the reporting period reaching a total of 500 migrant workers. Assessments have been extended to take place until the end of February 2021.

IOM **Libya's** Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) team published a report titled 'A Long Way from Home - Migrants' housing conditions in Libya'. The report reaffirms the criticality of having access to adequate housing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as people worldwide have been called to 'stay home' to curb the spread of the virus. Yet, overcrowded conditions coupled with a lack of access to water and sanitation makes those living in inadequate housing particularly vulnerable to contracting the virus. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of regular and daily labour opportunities in Libya have exacerbated pre-existing needs rendering access to secure and dignified housing more difficult. In addition to food and fuel price spikes, rent prices have reportedly risen to a level many migrants are unable to afford, putting many at risk of eviction.



Migrants are registered for the distribution of NFIs at the registration station set up at the outdoor for infection prevention ©IOM Libya

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