



## SITUATION OVERVIEW:

Migrants in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, have been among the most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the short term, IOM aims at providing support to migrants who are stranded in countries of destination. In addition, IOM will focus its efforts on addressing data gaps, enhancing national and community preparedness, response and recovery efforts, ensuring that affected people have access to basic services, commodities and protection as well as mitigating the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

Globally, an estimated 7.6 million international migrants are from Central Asia, and approximately 10.5 million migrants are from the Russian Federation.<sup>1</sup> The main countries of destination for the Central Asian nationals are the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Kazakhstan. The Russian Federation alone hosts approximately 12 million migrants.

Travel restrictions put in place by governments against the spread of COVID-19 have severe impacts on migrants' lives. Many migrants are facing disruption to travel plans, loss of income, or illness. Many may be pushed into vulnerable or exploitative situations. Previous crises have established that criminals, employers and others will seize the opportunity to exploit migrants by cutting or withholding wages, threatening to report migrants to authorities, and exploiting them in other ways.

Supporting the continuum of critical protection mechanisms and responses to those most in need, or in need of specific care and protection, such as women and girls at risk of or survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), children, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied and separated children, and elderly is critical. As such, identifying the most vulnerable amongst the migrant population, developing and implementing case plans, and overseeing delivery of the services necessary to uphold the rights of migrants in vulnerable situations and to move towards sustainable case resolution is of key importance.

For example, as of the end of April, only in Moscow and Moscow oblast, approximately 10,000 Kyrgyz migrants lost their jobs and ran out of means of support. There are reports of migrants who had to vacate their rental apartments and could not afford to rent a new ones. Also, some migrants were not allowed to leave the transit zone of the airports. Over 400 Central Asian citizens had spent nights at the Vnukovo Airport in Moscow, before the airports fully closed their doors leaving the migrants outside. In addition, migrants from Central Asia got stuck at the airports of Novosibirsk, Ufa, Krasnodar and Yekaterinburg, prior to the full closure of those airports. Among all vulnerable migrants, it is estimated that around 40 per cent are women and children. However, there is a need to conduct an assessment to verify those numbers.

<sup>1</sup> UN DESA (2019), Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2019 revision

Data and analysis on population and mobility are needed to understand the effects of COVID-19 in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, across borders, and at regional levels. Data remains crucial for a more targeted and evidence-based response, especially in identifying the most vulnerable amongst the migrant population.

Many migrants lack access to services as well as safe and appropriate living conditions, in addition to lacking access to accurate information on COVID-19. The current COVID-19 emergency is exacerbating all pre-existing vulnerabilities and risks of violence and discrimination, which can intersect with other factors such as gender, age and disability, but also nationality, status or ethnic origin.

If previous recessions may serve as an indication, declining remittances and increasing rates of returning migrants can be expected to place heavy economic and labour market burdens on countries of origin. The 2008-2009 global financial crisis resulted in the first ever recorded year-on-year decline in remittances at the global level. Likewise, the Russian Financial Crisis of 2014-15 wreaked havoc on Central Asian countries that depend on the Russian labour market for employment and remittances. From 2013 to 2016, annual remittances to Central Asia declined by 46 per cent as several million workers returned to their countries of origin, contributing to a substantial decline in GDP growth throughout Central Asia over this period. At the community-level, declining remittances will have a knock-on effect within local economies. Declining remittances places additional downward pressure on local economic activity across communities of origin. In communities where remittances represent a large portion of income, effects are considerable. The anticipated 15 per cent decline in remittances to Kyrgyzstan

this year, for example, will translate into a loss of approximately USD 361 million in local economies (almost 5% of GDP).

As it is already seen, disruptions to labour markets, in countries of destination will result in a vast number of migrant workers returning to communities of origin. At the same time, youth completing school and about to enter the labour market, many of whom will have planned to find work abroad, will now try to seek employment within the local labour market. The result is a surge in labour supply in economies that already struggle with un- and under-employment, putting further pressure on remittance-dependent economies. Declining economic activity combined with increased labour supply will exacerbate unemployment, place growing pressure on social services, and may lead to deteriorating wages and employment conditions in communities of origin.

Considering that the region is prone to both sudden-onset and slow-onset natural hazards and includes several environmentally fragile areas (e.g., Aral Sea, high mountain areas), in the wider context of the pandemic, this can have implications in case of natural disaster, or when loss of employment results in migrants returning to environmentally fragile communities. In communities that are prone to environmental hazards, remittances are often spent on ad-hoc adaptation measures, which allow these families to manage risks posed by environmental stressors and shocks. As settlements go into lockdown and people lose jobs, remittances to families staying back will decline, leaving them with fewer resources to manage environmental or climatic risks (e.g., variable rainfall, landslide, floods, drought, etc.) and eroding a vital economic safety net in sending areas.

## IOM'S APPROACH AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

In coordination and partnership with relevant actors at global and national levels, IOM is contributing to four strategic priorities of the IOM COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan - (SPRP) to halt further transmission of COVID-19 and mitigate the impact of the outbreak, including its social and economic impacts. In line with the In line with the revised SPRP, IOM is supporting governments and partners to understand population mobility trends and reinforce public health that aims to minimize disruption to society and the economy. While the efforts are initially focused on preparedness and response, IOM keeps the need for recovery in mind. This includes the approach of "Leaving No One Behind" as well as incorporating elements of social cohesion and programming throughout.

Therefore, IOM urges donors to respond in a flexible manner to allow for increased efficiency in responding to the priority concerns of Central Asian migrants stranded by the pandemic:

- Provide migrants in vulnerable situations, especially women and children, stranded in the main destination and transit countries (Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Turkey, etc.) with safe and appropriate living conditions, information on COVID-19 and preventive measures, protective masks and sanitizers, access to health screening, advice and services, and access to online education for migrant children.
- Capture the vulnerability of migrants that are being stranded to ensure appropriate assistance.
- Support Central Asian migrants in most difficult situations with return assistance safely and regularly in accordance with their governments' plans to return them to the homeland and, as well as support their economic and social reintegration in home communities given the COVID-19 pandemic, as mean to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the crisis on migrants and members of their families.
- Support migrants in difficult situations with counselling and referral to the state health-care system.
- Assist migrants to seek alternative employments across countries by serving as link between employers and migrants.



At regional and national levels, IOM will collaborate with governments and stakeholders to achieve the strategic priorities of the IOM COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, IOM COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan” to <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/iom-global-strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-coronavirus-disease-2019> that is to contribute to the global, regional and national preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 to reduce associated morbidity and mortality and prepare for and address the crosscutting humanitarian and development needs of vulnerable populations, such as migrants impacted by COVID-19; and contribute to the global effort to combat COVID-19 and its social and economic impacts.

In April 2020, IOM published a revised IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SRP) for COVID-19, to encompass IOM’s full spectrum of work with the impacts of COVID-19. The SRP remains in line with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19, launched on 25 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and its upcoming revision, and the forthcoming UN Framework for the Immediate socio-economic Response to COVID-19. This regional appeal is consistent with and provides more details on the requirements in IOM’s Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SRP) for COVID-19 that relate to Central Asia and the Russian Federation.

IOM intends to focus on four strategic priorities at the community, national and sub-regional levels: (1) effective coordination and partnerships as well as mobility tracking; (2) contribute to preparedness and response efforts that reduce morbidity and mortality; (3) efforts to ensure that affected people have access to basic services, commodities and protection; and (4) to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.



*Kyrgyz migrants leave Tolmachevo airport in Novosibirsk, the Russian Federation after airlines were forced to ground flights*

## HIGHLIGHTS: IOM’S ASSISTANCE TO DATE

In Kazakhstan, IOM continues to provide support to vulnerable migrants stranded at the border for an uncertain period. IOM and partners support vulnerable migrants in Kostanay, Aktobe, Turkestan, Karaganda and Kyzylorda regions and the cities of Shymkent and Almaty.

As a part of IOM’s assistance, food baskets, detergents and hygiene products are provided to migrant families. IOM assists undocumented stranded migrants and their family members, including children, to obtain proper documentation.

In total as of April 27, 2020 humanitarian and legal assistance is being provided to 430 migrants and their families from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and so forth. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz diaspora is providing assistance to stranded Kyrgyz migrants in coordination with IOM Kazakhstan.

In order to mitigate the vulnerabilities of Kyrgyz migrants stranded in the Russian Federation, IOM in Moscow, Kyrgyz diaspora, the State Migration Service and Embassies jointly rendered assistance, including distribution of protective equipment (masks, gloves, antiseptics), hot meals and provision of temporary accommodation. In total, 282 Kyrgyz migrants stranded in the airports of Moscow and Novosibirsk were assisted.



*PPE are distributed to migrants in crowded waiting lines on the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border*

## IOM'S AREAS OF INTERVENTION

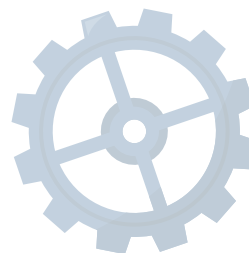
### STRATEGIC PRIORITY I.

ENSURE A WELL-COORDINATED, INFORMED AND TIMELY RESPONSE THROUGH MOBILITY TRACKING SYSTEMS AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION STRUCTURES ESTABLISHED AT THE COMMUNITY, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS.

#### COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS:

IOM continues actively participating in overall coordination mechanisms at national and sub-regional levels, in particular, cross-border coordination through:

- Developing operational guidance and assistance to the governments of Central Asian states for on-going emergency consular and other related activities.
- Strengthening cross-border coordination and enhancing mechanisms for regional and national information sharing and mechanisms to assist stranded and migrants in vulnerable situations from Central Asian countries.
- Supporting national governments to facilitate access to emergency health care for stranded and returning migrants, including identifying temporary legal solutions for access to medical care.
- Engaging and supporting inter-agency efforts and partnership with Central Asian diaspora to develop national and regional preparedness and response plans through contingency planning processes.
- Engage active civil society organizations in major migrant receiving provinces of Russian Federation to promote the interests of migrant communities during the implementation of COVID-19 national response plan.
- Supporting governments in establishing and developing coordination mechanisms, learning best institutional arrangements for managing migration processes in crisis situations.



#### TRACKING MOBILITY IMPACTS

IOM will contribute to providing a comprehensive understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on mobility at country level by:

- Rolling out the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) for Kazakhstan in order to improve understanding of migration dynamics and vulnerabilities among third country nationals in Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan nationals returning to the country as direct or indirect result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

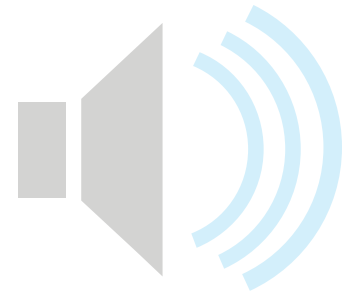
Increase technical capacities of partners, both from the governments and NGOs, to communicate and coordinate efficiently, and to ensure IOM operational presence through the partners.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE EFFORTS FOR COVID-19 TO REDUCE ASSOCIATED MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY.



### RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)



IOM continues to work with RCCE counterparts at regional and national levels to ensure that migrants have access to timely, context-specific and correct information on COVID-19 and prevention measures, through:

- Establishing a repository of products and practices for migrant-inclusive communications, including the development and translation of standard messages for migrants stranded in destination countries on recommended measures and rights to assistance.
- Engaging with migration authorities and diaspora in the host countries of migrants in RCCE activities at border points to disseminate information, prevention advice and advice on when/how to seek health care for travellers.
- Setting up Migrants Crisis Management Centres in major migrant receiving provinces and cities of the Russian Federation, as one stop shop provide timely information and advice including referral services to health services throughout the crisis.
- Supporting community-level awareness-raising in close coordination with municipality authorities in border communities, by training of municipality officials and community members, diaspora and migrants on prevention and preparedness measures, using appropriate medical and physical precautions.
- Dissemination of COVID-19 and migration related information through local transport hubs
- Mapping of diaspora through the Network of migrants and diaspora organizations develop, translate and distribute information messaging through electronic platforms (e.g. email distribution lists, social media, websites).



### DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

IOM will continue to enhance existing national level disease surveillance systems through:

- Producing guidance on disease surveillance in local languages and procuring some disease surveillance equipment for the partner organizations in order to increase their technical capacities.
- Engaging relevant national authorities through the Network of migrants civil society organizations across Russian Federation to map high risk transmission areas within migrants living community and conduct prevention measures including information dissemination.



### LOGISTICS, PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

IOM will handle logistics, procurement of necessary supplies based on migrants' needs and needs of frontline workers:

- Engaging with national authorities and UN partners to support the procurement, storage and distribution of critical supplies such as protective equipment (gloves, masks, sanitizers, COVID-19 rapid tests for existing GeneXpert machines in the target countries, etc.). For this, IOM, at the global level, is coordinating this with the Pandemic Supply Chain Network.

## POINTS OF ENTRY (PoEs)

IOM continues to support health and border authorities, as well as other partners, including NGOs and community-based organizations, to enhance the preparedness of PoEs to respond effectively to COVID-19 through:



- Conducting rapid assessment to determine key gaps in the capacity of the PoEs to address control and management of the COVID-19 outbreak including equipment, infrastructure and knowledge gaps.
- Providing essential PPE, such as masks, gloves, goggles, aprons and gumboots at prioritized PoEs.
- Providing screening equipment for COVID-19 (handheld non-contact thermometers, thermal scanners etc.)
- Providing targeted training for border officials on detection, screening, registration, isolation and referral of travellers potentially with COVID-19 infection, in full compliance with human rights and other relevant standards and practices, as well as occupational health and safety
- Supporting the development of standard operating procedures on the detection, screening, referral and management of ill travellers, including self-protection.
- Developing a system for data collection and analysis of returning migrants at risk of contracting COVID-19, and making sure it will be protection sensitive and in full respect of human rights, including right to privacy.
- Providing vehicles and equipment to facilitate transport of suspected and ill travelers to a quarantine or health facility
- Conducting physical refurbishment of isolation facilities at PoEs
- Supporting active surveillance, including health screening, referral and data collection at PoEs.
- Training for health and non-health workers at PoEs on disease control, referral and access to social services.
- Train partner-NGOs to respond effectively to COVID-19, by minimizing the health hazards to the NGO-staff and volunteers, having in-person communication, while delivering assistance and protection services.

## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPC)

Infection prevention and control measures are an effective way to prevent or limit transmission of the coronavirus disease and IOM will continue to support enhanced national capacity through:

- Establish, equip and develop a State Family Centre training team to build capacity of frontline government actors such as Border Guards and Migration Services in infection prevention and control. The team will also provide direct training and information provision at community level as required.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3.

ENSURE ACCESS OF AFFECTED PEOPLE TO BASIC SERVICES AND COMMODITIES, INCLUDING HEALTH CARE, AND PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

## CASE MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

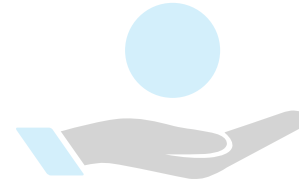
- Supporting national governments with provision of technical and operational support through short to medium term secondment of staff.
- Ensure primarily healthcare for stranded migrants, including provision of protective equipment (masks, respirators, etc.), and referral to appropriate health facilities



## PROTECTION

IOM continues to enhance capacities to ensure the protection and access to services of all migrants through:

- Assisting stranded and vulnerable migrants in destination and transit countries in accessing services adapted to their specific needs, including shelter, food, life-saving primary health care and procurement of critical medicines and medical supplies.
- Strengthening existing protection mechanisms and social services, including cross-border, to identify and support persons in need of care or protection and refer them to appropriate services, e.g. alternative care, emergency support or assistance, social services.
- Identifying and providing tailored protection and assistance services to victims of trafficking, separated and unaccompanied children and other vulnerable migrants whose current case plans have been disrupted by the crisis and update planning.
- Collating case data and generating regular statistical snapshots on the number of migrants requesting assistance, the types of vulnerabilities and exploitative practices identified, the types of services needed.
- Analysis on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and response on protection programming and protection trends within the communities, including protection trends at entry points, with the aim to exploring new responses, or adapting and maintaining critical protection services.
- Establishing a centralized fund to review and respond to requests for support for vulnerable migrants using IOM's established procedures for migrants' reintegration.
- Developing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) self-help tools tailored explicitly for stranded migrant populations in quarantine as well as the deployment of psychosocial mobile teams linguistically and culturally able to serve those populations.
- Ensure sustainable reintegration of stranded migrants upon their return to the country of origin through providing access to social protection schemes, MHPSS adequate skills training and/or financial support to improve their livelihood (including climate-smart income opportunities).
- Operate hotlines/web platforms and respond to requests for information and support from individual migrants.
- Develop and adapt systems by digitalizing information and processes to allow managing assistance and creating access to services remotely.
- Conducting trainings for partners to improve their capacity to identify and refer vulnerable cases in emergency situations, as well as to provide tailored services to beneficiaries.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4.

SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS TO RESPOND TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19.

## ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE CRISIS

Recognizing the importance of including migrants and other mobile population groups into UN development responses, IOM is actively engaging with various partners from governments, the private sector, civil society, communities and individuals to re-establish means of socio-economic support to prevent human suffering during the crisis, and provide for a durable recovery and incentivize green transition in the post-crisis environment focusing on:

- Conducting a rapid analysis, in partnership with specialized UN, financial organizations and multilateral development banks, to assess the immediate impacts of unfolding economic, environmental, financial and social disruptions on migrant, their families and host communities.
- Developing livelihood strategies for communities (including consideration of climate-smart income opportunities), skills development, job creation and cooperation with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) to support entrepreneurial activities of returning migrants.



- Prioritizing livelihoods and job creation in migrant accepting communities, through financial support to small and medium enterprises to rapidly resume operations and create sustainable jobs as sectors of the economy gradually resume their activities.
- Supporting governments in developing recommendations and addressing social and economic consequences of the Covid-19.
- Community stabilization and social cohesion efforts to address negative impacts of food shortages, increased poverty and unemployment amongst large numbers of returned migrants.
- Supporting migrants who lost jobs to find alternative employment opportunities through the network of migrants' civil society organizations across the Russian Federation, to link with potential employers.
- Supporting skills development and to launching of entrepreneurial or income-generating activities for the vulnerable returning migrants and migrants' family members, especially women dependent on remittances.
- Assessing socio-economic impact on access to decent work and ethical recruitment for migrants.

## IOM'S REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CAPACITY AND APPROACH TO RESPOND:

IOM stands ready to assist Member States (MS) and Observer States (Russian Federation) and partners to prepare and respond to assist MS with operational and technical support in the area of migration and health. IOM stresses its extensive experience in supporting governments and communities to prevent, detect and respond to health threats along the mobility continuum while advocating for migrant-inclusive approaches that minimize stigma and discrimination. IOM works with the Member States and governments to identify appropriate border management practices inclusive of health measures that allow for the gradual and safe establishment of mobility measures.

With offices in all five Central Asian countries and a full representation office in the Russian Federation and more than 120 staff members in the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, including staff members working on health and migrant assistance, IOM is uniquely placed to provide support in international public health emergencies. As a formal partner of WHO, a member of the Strategic Advisory Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Global Health Cluster, and more recently, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, IOM is increasingly a key player in responding to public health emergencies globally.

## IOM'S FUNDING REQUIREMENT

IOM's regional funding requirement until the end of 2020 for the Russian Federation and Central Asia is USD 7,039,000. In total, IOM is planning to directly assist to 8,500 migrants that are stranded and 238,400 with information.

This amount represents an indicative requirement for IOM's planned interventions for 11 months (updated on 27 April 2020), broken down by country, to cover emerging needs as needed and ensure migrants and mobility considerations are included in regional and national preparedness plans in Central Asian states. Funding requirements at the country level and per activity pillar will be dependent on the national counterparts' capacities and established capacity to respond correlated to emerging needs and mobility dynamics.



## REGIONAL BUDGET BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING REQUIREMENT

TOTAL REQUESTED AMOUNT

**USD 7,039,000**

### Summary of Financing Requirement:

COUNTRY BREAKDOWN	TOTAL REQUESTED AMOUNT (USD)
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	700,000
KAZAKHSTAN	1,814,000
KYRGYZSTAN	1,435,000
TAJIKISTAN	2,250,000
TURKMENISTAN	100,000
UZBEKISTAN	740,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,039,000</b>

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