

UNHCR REPRESENTATION OFFICE LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

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To enhance covid-19 prevention through hygiene, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency in Zambia, working with Government and partners, distributing soap in refugee settlements. Here, a soap distribution in Mayukwayukwa Refugee Settlement in Kaoma, Western Province/ @UNHCR Zambia

Key Highlights

# imported transmission of COVID	28
# local transmission of COVID	11
# COVID-19 among POCs	0
# total transmission of COVID	39
# total deaths reported	1

- (Of the confirmed COVID-19 cases, 37 are in Lusaka and two on the Copper Belt). All confirmed cases have been quarantined.
- The Ministry of Health has mapped out 4 COVID hotspots in Lusaka and Ndola; Five patients have been discharged; and one death recorded.

- Meetings of the Committee of Ministers, Committee of Permanent Secretaries, and the National Epidemic Preparedness, Prevention Control and Management Committee (NEPPC&MC) are regularly convened since the declaration of the outbreak of COVID-19.
- Daily press briefings on COVID are held at 11:30 on the evolving outbreak; technical coordinating meetings chaired by the Director of Zambian National Public Health (ZNPH) are held with cooperating partners; surveillance (including event-based surveillance) is active. The government will recruit 400 doctors and 3,000 paramedics starting 1 April 2020.
- Minister of Home Affairs has restricted movement within, from, and to refugee settlements and transit centers to avoid COVID-19 transmission.
- Senior government officials are among those quarantined after having travelled on official duty to a COVID-19 affected country.
- The Government, UN, and several organizations have activated BCPs including UNHCR Zambia.
- International borders remain open, though three international airports have been closed, with only the one in Lusaka remaining open.



Some of the humanitarian workers in Mayukwayukwa Refugee Settlement distributing soap to persons of concern/@UNHCR Zambia

COVID-19 related Protection risks/ challenges/ trends

- With restrictions on freedom of movement within, from, and to refugee settlements and transit centers, livelihoods will be challenged, and service delivery such as food distribution may be hampered.
- There is inadequate space for self-isolation at Makeni transit center and at Chalala medical house. Most urban refugees rent substandard houses in high density areas. Houses are small with poor ventilation and in most instances accommodate large families.
- PoCs who are detained in correctional facilities live in highly congested environments with poor hygiene and no room for self-isolation.

- As Zambia considers more strategies and measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, there is a possibility of a complete shut-down by closing international borders, thus potentially affecting passage through and access to the territory.
- There is a risk of xenophobia, bordering on the possibility that POCs who may fall ill might be accused by community members to have introduced the virus.

Operational update on preparedness and response

- As part of awareness-raising efforts, UNHCR CO met with refugee leaders in Lusaka to discuss COVID-19-related issues.
- Soap distribution was undertaken by UNHCR for March stock (simultaneously done with the March food distribution). A total of 250 grams/pp/ was given for one month in Mantapala Settlement. In Meheba Refugee Settlement, soap distribution (UNHCR stock) is currently being conducted. A total of 500grams/pp/pm for three months is being provided. While the amount UNHCR has may not be enough, the commodity in stock is being distributing per Block, as UNICEF's stock is awaited (to be delivered on 6th April) to complement the other Blocks that will not have received by next week. In Mayukwayukwa, soap distribution is on-going, while that in urban areas has been completed. When resources allow, and within the context of co-existence, there is need to extend soap distribution to the host community.
- In all three refugee settlements, hygiene promoters have conducted sensitization sessions among refugees and the host community.
- A total of 60 hand-basins have been distributed in the three settlements for use in service areas.

POC challenges to access health care including national services

- Refugees have access to general services. However, various restrictions imposed by Government concerning COVID-19 prevention and response will affect access to some basic services. Generally poor health delivery systems with low capacity to handle mass COVID-19 infections, coupled with constant shortage of some essential medicines, could be detrimental to the health of refugees during this period. Clinic staff in the settlements are currently undergoing COVID-19 specific trainings provided by the Ministry of Health.

Inter-agency coordination

- UNHCR continues to participate in various UN COVID-19 Crisis Management Committees;
- The SMT now meets on a weekly basis to discuss and deliberate on health, staff welfare, duty of care and security advisories for UN staff and AWF; The PMT is consolidating an inter-agency COVID response plan in support to the GRZ.

Operational and business-continuity issues (UNHCR or Partner services disrupted)

- The UNHCR activated UNCT Phase 3 BCP; The Government, the UN, several I-NGOs and other corporate partners have activated their BCP; UNHCR has also limited its footprint on office premises.

Program/Resources

- UNHCR Zambia has received some funds from RBZA to respond to Covid-19 which are being channeled to cater for procurement (soap is currently ongoing) and ensure health staff under UNV scheme to be urgently hired in all the three Settlements. Partners have been informed on the need to reprioritize their 2020 activities; UNHCR will redirect funds from both partners and under DI to cater for this health response once total costs of critical items are confirmed. UNICEF has expressed interest in supporting WASH items.

Supply: (please describe any shortages, supply chain disruptions or procurement challenges)

- A request for quotations for the local procurement of medicines targeting 10,000 persons has been floated with closing date 7 April 2020.
- The procurement of 30,153.5kg of laundry soap is ongoing.
- Challenges in procurement of some recommended hygiene materials maybe hampered by shortages of commodities due to high demand on the market.

HR/Staff

- 60% of staff is telecommuting across the operation.

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