



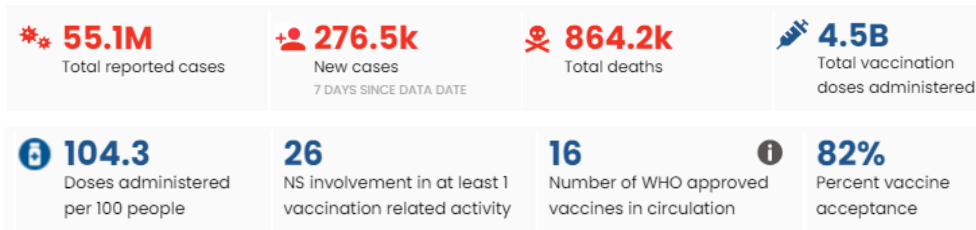
# COVID-19 OUTBREAK 20-MONTH UPDATE Asia Pacific Region



Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers are assisting with COVID-19 vaccination at the vaccination centres under the government nationwide campaign. Photo: IFRC

The narrative section of this report focuses on the main outcomes for the period between June and September 2021.

## Key data for the region (as of 8 November 2021)



## Financial Overview



### Funding Requirements:

**CHF 95 million**

### Income to date:

**CHF 100 million\***

### Expenditure to date:

**CHF 43.8 million**

\*The funding requirement is being revised as half of the income received have been earmarked to India and Bangladesh, while many countries in the region are still in need of funding support.

## National Society involvement per COVID -19 Operational Priority



**38 National Societies** Sustaining Health and WASH



**37 National Societies** Addressing Socio-economic Impact



**35 National Societies** Strengthening National Societies



35 National Societies in the region are actively supporting their health authorities in the vaccination roll -out.

## Regional overview

During the reporting period from June to September 2021, the **new waves** of COVID-19 continued to be fuelled by the Delta variant throughout the region. As cases in South Asia has mostly stabilized since the 16-month update, countries in South East Asia and the Pacific started to experience overwhelming surge in cases. Many countries have been rolling out major **COVID-19 vaccination** campaigns, but vaccine coverage remains below 10 per cent for several countries in the region including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea. Pandemic fatigue has also posed challenges to infection prevention and control measures. The **impacts of COVID-19 on socioeconomic** is severe especially among the most vulnerable including migrant workers and communities dependent upon remittances, those engaged in informal sectors and smallholders. Resources to support long-term recovery efforts beyond the immediate humanitarian needs are crucial moving forward. IFRC continues to welcome **flexible funding** to the wider Asia Pacific region through the COVID-19 Emergency Appeal (MDR50001).

### Priority 1: Sustaining Health and WASH

#### Epidemic control measures

National Societies continue to engage in epidemic control activities in communities and clinical settings. Regional capacity in epidemic prevention and control is being enhanced through the establishment of a regional Thematic Advisory Group on Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness consisting of Asia Pacific National Societies and Participating National Societies (PNS), which will develop a regional Asia Pacific epidemic and pandemic preparedness roadmap, support resource mobilization to scale up epidemic and pandemic preparedness and increase visibility for Red Cross Red Crescent and National Societies in the health security agenda.

#### Risk communication, community engagement, and health and hygiene promotion

National Societies continue to carry out WASH activities with COVID-19 preventive measures, to protect its staff, volunteers and the people they serve. Preventive measures taken include social distancing, wearing appropriate PPE and practising hand hygiene as well as carrying out activities in smaller groups of people to reduce risk of transmission and spread of diseases. Distribution of key hygiene messages has been a focus area, particularly on the importance of hand washing with soap, coupled with dissemination/display of relevant IEC materials.

#### Infection prevention and control & water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Emphasis continued to be placed on increasing access to appropriate WASH facilities such as handwashing stations and latrines, and to distribute suitable items required to maintain hygiene (be it personal or environmental) such as soap, disinfectants and cleaning materials.

#### Mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)

Together with Asia Pacific MHPSS Training and Learning Collaborative in Hong Kong, emphasis will be put on supporting the scaling up of regional capacity for Psychological First Aid (PFA) as a means to prevent and alleviate MHPSS needs and promote individual and community resilience. This is sought done through adopting the approach of "PFA for All".

#### Support for immunization

National Societies are supporting immunization activities, placing emphasis on complementing government efforts – especially in reaching marginalized groups such as documented and undocumented migrants. National Societies are also supporting through providing facilities and trained health staff to administer the vaccine.

### Priority 2: Addressing Socio-economic impact

#### Livelihoods and Household Economic Security

From June to September 2021, focus was given on undertaking analysis and assessing the need for initiating programme to address negative impact of COVID-19 in the socioeconomic sector. National Society Response Plans

have been revised accordingly. Technical support have been provided through discussion with Country Delegations (CD) and Country Cluster Delegations (CCD).

In the past 20 months, a total of 15 National Societies reported utilizing cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to address immediate basic needs of households impacted by the pandemic and the secondary economic impact. In the case of Viet Nam and Philippines, National Societies continued to provide food and cash assistance especially during the new waves and surge of COVID-19 cases. In order to better understand the secondary socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, a research on "Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 in Asia Pacific" has been initiated. This research will be initiated in December 2021, covering five countries – Bangladesh, Fiji, Mongolia, Philippines and Vietnam.

Regional Livelihood Reference Group (RLRG), Asia Pacific, was formed in April 2021 with membership from IFRC CDs, CCDs and National Societies. In the reporting period, the RLRG has organized regular monthly call to understand the progress on livelihoods and economic recovery. For example, there was a presentation from Rakhine Sub Delegation, Myanmar on the Community Resilience Project.

### Shelter and Urban settlements

Across the region, some shelter and settlements preparedness and response activities have been carried out to support containment of the virus along with mitigation of its spread within the past few months. Interventions included support to local quarantine centres through distribution of relief items and assessment of appropriate, dignified and safe living conditions, as well as the provision of temporary shelter where necessary. There has also been support for shelter and settlements that has been addressed through CVA.

APRO has supported the dissemination of the "Step-by-step Guide to Rental Assistance" guidance throughout the region, including sharing information on the guidance, TipSheets, webinars as well as the newly launched rental assistance training course that is available on the IFRC Learning Platform.

Lastly, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> session on Asia Pacific Webinar Series which focused on the interlinkages between shelter and settlements sector and the COVID response, with global RCRC examples of specific interventions including support for setting up quarantine centres, rental assistance programs supporting vulnerable women to evictions, the 1<sup>st</sup> [Cross-regional Shelter and Settlements Newsletter](#) also focused around 'Shelter during a Pandemic Response' The Newsletter, not only provided access to key resources and guidelines on this topic and information on upcoming webinars, it also promoted further the work done by National Societies disseminating the lesson learnt by those National Societies working on the provision of shelter and settlement assistance in the COVID-19 context.

#### Gaps to be addressed:

- The long-term socio-economic effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt in the coming months and years, impacting the sheltering and accommodation situation of the vulnerable families. With the decreasing socio-economic power, it is likely that evictions will increase and people who were previously not on the radar as being vulnerable will drop below the line.
- Regarding the scale-up of CVA: work must continue to build the capacity of National Societies to deliver cash programming geared towards rental assistance, as part of cash preparedness efforts.
- In the fast-moving pace of the initial months of the pandemic, it has not been possible to fully explore the supporting function of shelter and settlements programming to deliver public health outcomes. Attention will be given by global team to identify and address the gaps in this respect.

### Migration and Displacement

The IFRC Asia Pacific Migration and Displacement team continues to provide regional coordination and technical guidance to National Societies to support migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) at risk of COVID-19 and its impacts. This included:

- Regional monitoring and analysis of developments, trends and risks related to migration and displacement

- Coordinating the development of specific guidance on assistance and protection activities for migrants, refugees and IDPs during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on access to COVID-19 vaccines and associated information
- External engagement including in inter-agency and multi-stakeholder regional fora; and support for national and regional level communications on migration, displacement and the COVID-19 crisis
- Public facing communications and humanitarian diplomacy included contributions from Asia Pacific National Societies to the latest Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab publication - *Sight unseen: A vision for effective access to COVID-19 vaccines for migrants*, which complements the earlier analysis prepared by the Global Migration Lab in March 2021, on barriers to accessing basic services for migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This latest publication takes stock of the current global trends with respect to migrants' access to COVID-19 vaccines and draws on publicly available data from a range of sources, including research organizations, governments, the United Nations, media and civil society organizations, complemented by insights and case studies from a survey of **52 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** working directly with migrants and host communities around the globe. The report documents common barriers faced by migrants in accessing COVID-19 vaccines, captures key actions and learnings from National Societies in supporting migrants to access vaccines and puts forward a number of recommendations to ensure vaccine equity for all.

## **Priority 3: Strengthening National Societies**

### **National Society readiness**

The IFRC APRO has continued to prioritize National Society strengthening so that National Societies can fulfil their role as auxiliary to the government and transform their ways of working to be COVID-safe and disaster-ready. National Societies have reviewed programming protocols to ensure that all activities are COVID-safe for personnel and affected communities. APRO has supported National Societies to develop or adapt multi-hazard contingency plans in anticipation of the compound impacts of COVID pandemic and seasonal risks. Some National Societies have organized pre-disaster planning workshops and meetings in anticipation of disaster season.

National Societies have been supported to develop and maintain their Emergency Operations Centres to follow the situation, to analyze information collected and to deliver processed information within National Societies and to other stakeholders.

### **National Society sustainability**

IFRC's support in the area of financial sustainability remains an ongoing process with continued support to National Societies in the area of core cost. IFRC together with Norwegian Red Cross, Australian Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross has had 2 workshops during this period to provide better understanding for National Societies. The workshops held were aimed at identifying core cost and presenting a framework for the National Societies to calculate the core cost.

In addition, four National Societies in Asia Pacific have been actively supporting the global initiative to pilot a financial sustainability dashboard. The National Societies involved are Timor-Leste Red Cross (CVTL), Mongolian Red Cross Society, Solomon Islands Red Cross Society and Kiribati Red Cross Society. This initiative begun in August 2021 and is currently ongoing. The objective of this pilot is not only to get feedback on the usefulness of indicators contained in the dashboard but also in the process for National Societies to understand better their income generation activities and areas that can be further improved to support the sustainability.

### **Support to volunteers**

IFRC's support to the National Societies to improve the duty of care towards its volunteers is an ongoing process. We continually advocate National Societies to ensure that the highest level of care and protection is afforded to its volunteers who are working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. With the support of the Lacoste and the Emergency Appeal, the Asia Pacific region has supported 6 National Societies to establish the Volunteer Solidarity Mechanism to ensure that volunteers have protection and financial support in case of illnesses or injuries.

The IFRC is also constantly advocating that volunteers should be equipped with personal protective equipment to ensure that volunteers are able to operate in a safe and efficient manner. Apart from COVID-19 medical personal protective equipment, other equipment such as lifejackets, raincoats, safety helmets, etc. are also provided to volunteers when working in the field. The Asia Pacific Regional Office is also providing technical and financial support to ensure that National Societies provide these basic necessities to the volunteers. This effort will continue especially with upcoming monsoon season in many parts of Asia where the ongoing pandemic coupled with natural hazards will be a norm within the region.

## **Enabling Actions and Support Services**

### **Communications**

IFRC Asia Pacific has collaborated with National Societies and IFRC Geneva to achieve significant international news media including opinion articles and coverage across digital news, print, TV and radio reaching tens of millions of people in Asia and around the world. **Opinion Articles included, in the Bangkok Post:** [Migrants can help beat Covid-19](#), [Malaysian New Straits Times](#), [Nepal Times](#) – [Global solidarity needs intensive care in pandemic battle](#).

A [press release on the COVID vaccine divide](#) in Asia, has been relayed by many high-value media outlets such as Associated Press, Reuters, VOA, the Guardian. A story on the Associated Press COVID-19 news feed was run in hundreds of digital, print and broadcast outlets globally, including [UK Independent](#), [US ABC TV News and Digital](#), [Canada CBC Digital](#), [Republic World](#). Alexander Matheou was interviewed on [Channel News Asia](#).

**Major international media coverage was achieved on the COVID surge in Indonesia** including [CNN live interview](#), [BBC World interview](#) and [ABC News Radio interview](#). [The Guardian](#), [BBC World](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CNA](#), [Tagesschau](#), [the New Humanitarian](#), [Deutsche Welle's interview](#). An [AP story](#) has been picked up by key media outlets such as [ABC News](#), [CTV News](#), [Daily Mail](#), and a [Reuters story](#) ran in dozens of outlets.

**Significant and influential global media on Myanmar COVID crisis:** [Washington Post](#) – [Myanmar's coup fueled a covid surge](#), [Swiss Info](#), [Reuters Global Newswire](#), [Bangkok Post](#), [CNN International](#), [The Guardian](#).

A Reuters article - [Settlements locked down as Fiji endures deadly coronavirus wave](#) and associated [Reuters TV story](#), quoting IFRC Pacific Head of Delegation: [Euro News](#), [Swiss Info](#), [Singapore Straits Times](#), [Yahoo News Global sites](#). AP Newswire – [Death rates soar in Southeast Asia as virus wave spreads](#) published in [Los Angeles Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [ABC – Australia Digital](#), [ABC Radio National interview](#), [The Toronto Globe and Mail](#), [Fox News Digital](#).

A [press release issued on 18 August](#) quoting IFRC Asia Pacific Director. A story on the **Associated Press** COVID-19 news feed was run in hundreds of digital, print and broadcast outlets globally, including [Canada CTV News](#), [US ABC News Digital](#), [New York Times](#) Live Updates.

A story published by **Reuters Newswire** - [Southeast Asia needs vaccine access to curb record deaths - Red Cross](#), was published in dozens of major media including: [CBC Canada](#), [Washington Post](#), [Singapore Straits Times](#). [The Guardian UK - International](#), [UK The Telegraph](#).

**CNN TV two Live interviews** on COVID-19 surge in Southeast Asia. **CNN Digital:** [Indonesia is now the epicenter of Asia's Covid-19 crisis](#). Here's what you need to know (Jan Gelfand) and [Channel 7 Australia Digital](#), National Geographic: [Indonesia is a new COVID-19 epicentre. The peak has yet to come](#).

Extensive photo and video content packages from across the region, being used with strong engagement globally on IFRC and National Society social media channels and digital platforms. **Exposure photo stories** - [Indonesia COVID hospital](#), [Recovering from typhoon Goni in a pandemic](#), [India – volunteers vaccinate – A force to be reckoned with](#).

A broad range of publications supporting Asia Pacific National Societies including: Video - 'When Empathy Wins' - sharing facts on COVID-19 featuring Dr Arvind. Infographic series, including Covid in the Pacific and Myanmar Covid Response, Video series - Indonesia COVID response, Nepal Red Cross Society - 'COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Operation 2020-2021' and Overview on the Southeast Asia Delegation operations.

## Information management

Since its first launching in January 2021, the [COVID-19 Portal](#) has been revised several times due to the emerging COVID-19 situation and subsequent response. A new dashboard called [COVID-19 country profile analysis](#) was added to the portal in August 2021. This dashboard is developed to analyze the country profile risk related to COVID-19 operation using six indicators, namely direct health impact, cases per million 7-day average, vaccination rate, compounding disasters, and positive rate. New analysis on the daily new confirmed cases per million people, biweekly cases charts has been added into the [COVID-19 Outbreak](#) dashboard to support the development of the monthly situation report. This dashboard also successfully transformed to a fully automated update to optimize the dissemination of COVID-19 status to be more timely and accurate. In the last 90 days, the [COVID-19 Portal](#) has been accessed 2,148 times by users from 59 countries worldwide. [COVID-19 Outbreak](#), [Vaccine Landscape](#), and [Operation Analysis](#) dashboards are the top three visited by users among 16 dashboards in the portal.

The APRO IM has provided technical support to CEA team and National Societies from Malaysia, Fiji, Cambodia and Tuvalu to conduct the COVID-19 community survey. The CEA mobile data collection is currently ongoing with several subjects such as general community feedback on COVID-19, community feedback on vaccine hesitancy as well as community insight on COVID-19 and vaccination.

## Logistics and supply chain

The Global Humanitarian Services and Supply Chain Management, Asia Pacific (GHS&SCM-AP) unit in Kuala Lumpur has been fully engaged, providing support in the supply chain management aspect of the COVID-19 operations since the start of the outbreak. In the past 20 months, the GHS&SCM-AP unit had supported the response for the first and second wave outbreak & preparedness efforts in the region in the following areas.

### Procurement

- Secured value of CHF 26 million, with approximately CHF 14 million or 54% for local procurement.
- Quality assurance undertaken for close to 50 procurement files worth CHF 5 million.
- For the second wave response, additional procurement close to CHF 3 million concluded for oxygen related equipment and oxygen plants for the region.
- All the activities were conducted in line with IFRC Logistics and Procurement Procedures and quality assurance guidelines, focusing on the overall support enabling the National Societies to carry out their response plan in a timely and effective manner.
- On suppliers' management, more than 20 suppliers including manufacturer and trader/distributor for PPE and consumable validated and supplier due diligence process completed with Finance.

### Logistics & Mobilization

- 6 Mobilization Tables were launched, seeking in-kind donation for value close to CHF 17 million. We have also received cash pledge earmarked towards the Mobilization Tables from donors.
- Actively coordinated on both the multilateral and bilateral in-kind donations mostly on PPEs with the support of IFRC Medical Logistics on quality assurance verification.
- Under this operation, 9 personnel have been deployed under various profile which included procurement, logistics and supply chain coordination.
- Engagement with different partners and stakeholders such as ICRC, WFP, UPS and Qatar Airways on joint tender, staff in-kind and free flights support. Sourcing of free transportation has been extended to Airbus, Airlink and Turkish Airlines. Collaborating closely with AHA Centre, World Custom Organizations (WCO) and UN agencies on different platforms for the promotion of humanitarian diplomacy agenda and logistics access.

### Fleet

- Technical support and assistance had been provided to facilitate the purchase of the negative pressure ambulances, mobile blood unit vehicles and upgrade of the ambulances in the region.

- In close coordination with Global Fleet Unit (GFU), there have been close to 107 vehicles (including ambulances, testing vans, bloods collection vans) procured and in the process of being procured for the region, including for Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

## Financial Analysis

Asia-Pacific Overview	Amount (CHF in million)
Appeal Funding Requirement	95
Confirmed Income	100
Total Operating Budget 2020-22	84.4
Expenditure Year-to-Date	43.8
Budget Implementation	52%
Income vs Funding Requirement	NA (FR under revision)

A total confirmed income of CHF 100 million has been received for Asia Pacific. While the income has exceeded the total funding requirement of CHF 95 million, almost half of the income are earmarked to India and Bangladesh. A lot of countries in Southeast Asia and Pacific are still in need of further funding. These funding needs will be the focus of the forthcoming revision of the appeal.

National Societies and IFRC in the Asia Pacific region have requested no-cost extension for several funding to ensure that implementation can be carried out and reported in a timely manner. Flexibility of donors to extend project timeframe has been much appreciated. Being the most disaster-prone region in the world, many countries, like Afghanistan, the Philippines and Pakistan, are also facing concurrent emergencies that have caused delays in implementation. Managing concurrent emergencies have stretched local capacities and delayed community outreach activities among affected population.

Due to the second wave of COVID, countries like India, Nepal and Bangladesh had much increased needs and hence, income. This created pressure to implement and spend in a timely manner. On the other hand, countries like PNG, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and some of the Pacific islands have spent more than 80% of the confirmed income. Hence, they are in huge need of additional funds to support the response.

## National Society response – key highlights

### Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

BDRCS with the support from IFRC and PNSs continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the country. Ten in-country PNSs are supporting BDRCS multilaterally and bilaterally in COVID-19 operations – American Red Cross, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, German Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross Society, Qatar Red Crescent, Swedish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross and Turkish Red Crescent. Overall, more than 14,000 staff, youth and community volunteers have been mobilized in the COVID-19 response operation. On average, 1,600 volunteers are assisting the vaccination programme every day and BDRCS supported around 20.4 million people to receive their COVID-19 jab in nationwide vaccination campaign. Some other noteworthy COVID-19 response activities for this reporting period include:

- 640 **oxygen cylinders** and 148 **oxygen concentrators** sent to 68 BDRCS branches, including Mother and Child Care (MCH) centres in remote areas. Additionally, BDRCS distributed (7 sets) high flow nasal cannula to Holy Family Medical College Hospital in Dhaka and (3 sets) to Magura district 250 government general hospital. The oxygen cylinders and concentrators benefitted 4,904 people with lifesaving free 24/7 oxygen support.
- 21 units **ambulances** hired for providing emergency 24/7 transportation service to the critical COVID-19 patients (19 units supported by IFRC), which helped reach 2,170 COVID-19 patients with free ambulance services in the worst affected districts.
- Distributed **cooked food** in the most 18 impacted districts. During 21 June to 30 September, 166,800 people were reached with cooked food pack, especially whose livelihood adversely affected due to country wide movement restriction.
- 337,320 people with **face mask** during June – September.
- 43,702 people reached through country wide **MCH centres** of BDRCS during the reporting period, through different services (e.g. ANC, PNC, delivery, counselling, EPI, family planning) under its basic health care services.
- 676 people reached with **psychosocial support (PSS)** during this reporting period. So far, 37,454 people reached by BDRCS with PSS service during this pandemic. In addition, the **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) lab** at the Holy Family hospital has conducted 1,706 tests and confirmed 445 positive cases as of 21 September 2021.
- 6,686 households reached with **unconditional cash support** during this reporting period (2,986 HHs in 8 districts were supported by IFRC).
- IFRC has issued a work order for the installation of a **new oxygen generation plant with filing system and gas pipelining** at BDRCS Holy Family Hospital. The supplier's full assignment will take 20 weeks.
- 4 tenders launched by IFRC CD to **strengthen the capacity of BDRCS blood centre** at Dhaka. These include blood centre's consumables, renovation work, IT equipment and electronics items.
- IFRC CD team attended multiple meetings with USAID, existing partners in Bangladesh and the IFRC regional office regarding possible **COVID-19 partnership**.
- 533 calls received through the **CEA hotline number** related to information request, service request, vaccination information, etc during this reporting period.
- **ITV**, a leading UK television network, published a photo and video story on BDRCS COVID-19 response in Rajshahi. Social media videos on the overall COVID-19 response and oxygen, ambulance, and cooked food support have been posted by BDRCS and IFRC. Also, the IFRC newswire has updated the COVID19 key messages.



*BDRCS volunteers providing lifesaving free oxygen support to COVID-19 patients at their homes. Photo: IFRC*

### Population Movement Operation (PMO), Cox's Bazar

- From early 2020 to 12 September 2021, **WHO** reported 2,975 cases in the camp settlement and 16,974 cases in the host community in Cox's Bazar district. From 2020 to 12 September 2021, 32 people died in the camp community (this count stood at 10 in January 2021, before the recent spike in cases). 247 in the host community (this count stood at 73 in January 2021, before the recent spike in cases).

- The government began **vaccinations of the camp population** on 10 August 2021. Between 10 and 23 August, 36,943 people were vaccinated in the camps. The targeted groups for this first round of vaccinations are community leaders and the rest of the camp population aged 55 and above. The second dose of vaccinations for the same group was given between September 18 and 23. Around 895,515 people live in 34 camps, with roughly 49 per cent of them being over 18. (Source: Joint Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR Population Factsheet published in August 2021).
- BDRCS **Isolation and Treatment Centre (ITC)** is one of 12 ITCs operating in the camp. On 25 September, the ITC which has a 30-bed capacity, had 10 beds occupied. Start of ITC till 30 September, total OPD 7,268, IPD 484 treated.
- BDRCS reached 1,186,544 people through hygiene promotion, treated 4,572 people with COVID-19 symptoms, established 11 information hubs and desks, and treated 1,683 people at the Integrated Isolation Treatment Centre.

### Bhutan Red Cross Society

The Bhutan Red Cross Society (BRCS), as an auxiliary to the Government of Bhutan, has played a vital role in complementing the government's effort in combating the COVID-19 pandemic especially during lockdowns, through various national response activities.

BRCS was accredited by the government's Health Emergency Management Committee as the **lead agency for dead body management and cremation related activities** during lockdowns. The National Society's specialized volunteers have also handled the management and transportation of any COVID-19 related and suspected deaths. They were deployed for transporting and performing the last rites of the deceased.



BRCS specialized in volunteers transport and performing the last rites for COVID-19 related deaths. Photo: BRCS

**Isolation and clinical case management for COVID-19 cases** - BRCS volunteers have also supported the Ministry of Health in the collection of **swab samples for COVID-19 testing**, in coordination with the Royal Centre for Disease Control, and have been part of health screenings organized at Bhutan's border entries. They have been a part of various **surveillance and disinfection activities**, especially in the southern areas of the country categorized as high-risk areas. This has included ensuring public compliance to health protocols, disinfection of vehicles and commodities and public advocacy on the COVID-19 precautionary measures in the respective Dzongkhags, thereby helping prevent the spread of the infection.

The National Society's extensive specialized volunteer network has been used to **provide public service delivery** to those stranded and in need in rural and urban areas, especially during national lockdowns. Prior to the lockdown, BRCS carried out an extensive COVID-19 advocacy programme and set up a total of **43 WASH facilities** in 20 Dzongkhags.

The National Society has been running a **'Red Cross Ride for Health'** initiative. As part of this, BRCS volunteers supply free transportation, within districts as well as across districts, to patients from their homes to hospitals and back. This service has helped a total of 245 patients. The National Society also supplied a total of **215 meal boxes** to travellers during lockdowns, especially for patients discharged from hospitals and their attendants.

**Support for COVID-19 immunization** - BRCS also supported the Government of Bhutan's effort in the vaccination roll out programme and in transporting health workers to help the public register for the vaccination.

### Cambodian Red Cross

The Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) has trained 664 staff and volunteers on Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) through



The CRC team spreading COVID-19 prevention messages among the public. Source: CRC

online trainings from May to August 2021. The trainers were drawn from the Royal University of Phnom Penh for MHPSS. In August and September 2021, the MHPSS virtual trainings were continuously rolled out for a total of 1,555 staff and volunteers (377 females) from 25 different Red Cross branches.

The CRC volunteers/youth are promoting behaviour change among local communities to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. Teams from the branches are conducting home visits, meetings in small groups of less than 10 people and spreading messages on prevention of COVID-19 using Posters, Flyers, Banners, mobile loudspeakers and peer educators. They have reached 479,443 people (274,587 females) and 4,246 migrants (2,338 females) in 6,167 villages.

### Red Cross Society of China (RCSC)

**Response to the COVID-19 outbreak** – From 20 July to the end of August, China went through a large-scale domestic COVID-19 outbreak, as the Delta variant spread to 17 of 31 provinces. The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) branches actively implemented COVID-19 response and control work. From 2 to 8 August, the RCSC Zhengzhou branch set up a Red Cross Medical Transfer Team, dispatching 81 vehicles with 135 drivers and medical staff, and transferred 361 target individuals. In Nanjing, the Chinese Red Cross Foundation donated 5.94 million masks to the RCSC Nanjing branch. Responding to the Fujian province COVID-19 outbreak in September, the RCSC dispatched medical supplies and transferred RMB 1 million (CHF 143,117) to support COVID-19 prevention and control in branches.

**Recovery from the pandemic** – The RCSC plans to construct RCSC Emergency Command and Dispatch Centres (ECDC) in 32 provincial branches to strengthen the RCSC communication network during crises or emergencies. To support RCSC, the IFRC secretariat, under the IFRC COVID-19 Global Emergency Appeal, procured 24 emergency command and control mainframe servers and donated them to the National Society in June. These servers have been transferred and installed at 24 RCSC branches.

The Hongkong Red Cross branch of RCSC (HKRC) organized a seminar entitled "Humanitarian Services in the New Normal" on 9 July 2021 to exchange and encourage cross-sector collaboration. The HKRC maintains [an online platform](#) to update risk communication and community engagement materials and circulate them among selected high-risk groups. In addition, the HKRC's second and expanded round of the Integrated Food Voucher Programme started in September 2021 and benefited 900 people who received cash vouchers.



The medical transfer team of RCSC Zhengzhou branch was transferring target groups. Source: RCSC

**International assistance** – From June to August 2021, the RCSC mobilized resources and donated COVID-19 vaccines to other countries in need. In July and August 2021, the Hongkong Red Cross branch of RCSC (HKRC) contributed more than HKD 2 million (CHF 235,600) to Afghanistan, Nepal, Indonesia and Myanmar through IFRC and ICRC. The funds provided oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders and other medical equipment to the countries, and supported their COVID-19 health programmes.

### Cook Islands Red Cross Society

In June 2021, the Cook Islands Red Cross Society (CIRC) supported their Ministry of Health (MoH) in Rarotonga to roll out the second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. This was a big achievement for the country as they managed to vaccinate over 90% of the over-18 population.

In August, the CIRC supported the MoH in contact tracing during a three-week response to the threat posed by the outbreak of the Delta variant in Auckland, New Zealand. The Cook Islands was on heightened alert due to the travel bubble created between NZ and the Cook Islands, which opened on 17 May 2021 and closed on 16 August in response to the NZ outbreak. During "Operation Delta", volunteers and staff of the CIRC were based at the MoH, working with the Health Intelligence Unit to carry out contact tracing of all arrivals from NZ between 4 to 16 August. These people were

traced, tested and then isolated until they received a negative test result. Approximately 3,500 people were tested during this time, and fortunately, all test results came back negative. The CIRC staff and volunteers traced target travellers, provided them with instructions on behalf of the MoH, and informed them of their tests results.

'Operation Delta' was a fantastic opportunity for CIRC to work with the MoH in contact tracing, with many lessons learnt captured for future responses. Subsequently, CIRC collaborated with the MoH to draft the contract tracing SOP. Discussions are underway on possibly hosting the Contact Tracing Unit within the CIRC office during an outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. Such measures ensure the contact tracing unit will not be exposed to risks associated with working at the MoH premises together with the clinical response team.

CIRC supports the MoH in risk communication and promotes COVID-19 preventative measures through face-to-face training with communities, online platforms, and local media outlets. The National Society has also partnered with the Tourism Corporation to produce promotional banners on the alert levels and contact tracings. The CIRC also supports the Chamber of Commerce by providing them with volunteers to promote and roll out the CookSafe+ contact tracing app in various locations and events around Rarotonga.



A CIRC volunteer providing support at the vaccination centre. Source: CIRC

### Red Cross Society of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK RCS)

The DPRK government has taken consistent pre-emptive and offensive measures since the outbreak of COVID-19, continuing to raise awareness of all people with campaign against the rapid spread of highly infectious new COVID-19 variants. Since the outbreak, the DPRK RCS, through its wide network of volunteers and branches across the country, has actively joined the nationwide anti-epidemic campaign, working closely with national stakeholders including the Ministry of Public Health and the state anti-epidemic authorities.

During this reporting period, around 134,100 Red Cross volunteers have been mobilized across the country to support the nationwide anti-epidemic activities including awareness raising, surveillance and screening of the community. Red Cross volunteers worked closely with household doctors and anti-epidemic staff to provide around 1.37 million people with services including risk communication and community engagement and health and hygiene promotion. Around 10,000 Red Cross volunteers were educated about hygiene messages, common knowledge, preventive measures related to COVID-19 through public education networks in their respective cities and counties in close cooperation with anti-epidemic authorities and household doctors. In addition, DPRK RCS with the support of IFRC country delegation has finalized the bill of quantity for procurement of materials and PPE kits to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Fiji Red Cross Society

Since the Delta variant was detected on 17 April 2021, Fiji has recorded over 51,977 cases, with widespread COVID-19 community transmission. In response to this outbreak, the Fiji Government, with the support of the Fiji Red Cross, has rapidly accelerated the vaccination programme. The FRCS has deployed over 200 volunteers from 15 branches to assist the MoH at vaccine sites. Volunteers are responsible for registering individuals at the sites and completing data entry and verification tasks supporting the MoH vaccination team. The FRCS volunteers have also joined mobile vaccination teams, travelling to remote communities inland or in maritime areas to ensure equal access to vaccinations.

In addition to assisting the vaccination programme, FRCS has also been supporting the MoH COVID-19 response at screen sites and through a nationwide blood donor recruitment drive. A team of volunteers has been deployed at screening sites to provide administrative support, including issuing clearance letters for individuals. The FRCS warned that the COVID-19 pandemic had heavily impacted the country's blood supply. In response, approximately 80 FRCS volunteers carried out a nationwide blood drive during August and September 2021, with 1,014 individuals donating blood.

### Indian Red Cross Society

India hit the highest number of daily cases, 414,188 on 7 May 2021 and the highest number of daily deaths, 7,374 on 10 June; both figures have been decreasing continuously. During the period from mid-June to mid-October 2021, India recorded around 4.5 million new COVID-19 cases. As of 21 October 2021, there were 1.8 lakh active cases. The daily new infections have come down from 67,294 to 14,936 per day in the last four months.

**Support for Immunization:** During the reporting period, Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) has supported people to access vaccinations through the state governments' vaccination programme. IRCS also distributed masks, soaps, sanitizers, and gloves to those in need, as well as raised community awareness of COVID-19 and immunization, including handwashing demonstrations and the distribution of IEC materials.

**Medical Relief services:** A total of 175 oxygen concentrators were distributed to states and IRCS' Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal state branches started oxygen concentrator banks in their respective states. The National Society also installed oxygen related equipment at various locations. IRCS has clinics in more than 100 polyclinics, health centres and hospitals across the country and supported COVID-19 patients.

**Ambulance services:** More than 200 Red Cross ambulances across the country are helping to transport patients to hospitals while IRCS continues to conduct blood services. IRCS also supports local administrations in surveillance, screening at state borders, testing, and the setting up of isolation/quarantining facilities.

A 24/7 telephone helpline, manned by volunteer doctors, is providing callers with information about COVID-19 and how to access assistance. IRCS also provided food to people living in hard-to-reach areas and people who could not go out due to lockdown restrictions. In addition, IRCS supported the Government of India in logistics arrangements of in-kind foreign aid that was coming in from various countries.

IRCS' Telangana state branch runs two Urban Health and Family Welfare Centres catering to two urban slums in Hyderabad. The centres are vaccinating people in the slums – some of the most difficult to reach communities in that city. Volunteers have gone from door-to-door promoting vaccination.



*IRCS' Belagavi district branch in the state of Karnataka and the Taluka Health Office conducted a vaccination drive in an aviation business and at a training academy. Some 180 people received vaccinations. Photo: IRCS*

### Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS)

**Medical treatment** – Overall, 89 out of 91 Japanese Red Cross Hospitals have been involved in the COVID-19 operations. As of 29 August, 1,196 inpatients and 16,997 patients were admitted to Japanese Red Cross hospitals, and 149,834 COVID-19 outpatients were treated. These Red Cross Hospitals have also deployed 7,655 medical personnel to other medical facilities, social welfare facilities, prefectures/local governments, PCR testing sites, and vaccination campaign sites. In response to the government's request, the medical teams from Tokyo and Saitama Red Cross hospitals were also deployed to some Olympic and Paralympic venues to support medical rescue teams.

**COVID-19 immunizations** – Japanese Red Cross Hospitals have been contributing to the government's vaccine campaign. Over 65 hospitals have administered vaccine rollout inside the facilities, and 38 hospitals deployed staff members to the local vaccination venues. Even though over 92% of medical staff members are fully vaccinated, some cases were still confirmed inside the Red Cross Hospitals and adequately supported.

**Support to the vulnerable groups** – Poverty is one of the exacerbating factors under the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. Socially vulnerable families and people are deeply affected. In Japan, many children cafeterias provide meals at a reasonable price to children are unable to eat at home under the COVID-19 pandemic. The JRCS volunteer corps purchased and donated surplus food to the children's cafeterias through a food drive. The Awara City Red Cross Volunteer

Corps carries out this food drive for the children's cafeteria once a month. Some JRCs corps also conduct food drives or food banks for those in need during this pandemic.

**Kiribati Red Cross Society**

KRCS coordinates with the Ministry of Health and the Office of the President to implement COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation activities. Targeted RCCE on COVID-19 is an ongoing priority in Kiribati. Since June, KRCS volunteers have reached 400 households in Betio by distributing pamphlets and posters with COVID-19 safety measures. COVID-19 risk communication messaging is also regularly disseminated by the NS through local media platforms like radio, TV, and newspapers.

In August, following a request for assistance with vaccine rollout, 16 KRCS volunteers trained in vaccine CEA assisted the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) with vaccine registration. The KRCS also visited ten primary schools in South Tarawa to distribute hygiene kits to students, ensuring they maintained COVID-19 safe practices and kept themselves safe.

In September, a training was conducted at the KRCS Maneaba branch with volunteers from two selected communities in Betio (Ueenterooti and Betio Camp communities) and the Mesi community in Ambo. The training's purpose was to increase community involvement in the COVID-19 prevention program. Volunteers are trained on community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) and community mobilization. Training with Kiribati National Olympic Committee (KNOC) sports referees was also conducted on first aid and COVID-19. At the Teinainano Urban Council (TUC) branch, 19 community volunteers (nine males and 10 females) trained in COVID-19 risk communication are expected to share their knowledge with peers, families and other community members.

**Republic of Korea National Red Cross (KNRC)**

**Medical treatment** – Since the pandemic's beginning, the KNRC has been conducting treatment and screening of COVID-19 confirmed patients through Red Cross Hospitals across the country. Seoul, Sangju, Yeongju, and Tongyeong Red Cross Hospitals have been designated and operating as COVID-19 Treatment Hospitals. Seoul, Incheon, Tongyeong, and Geochang Red Cross Hospitals have been categorized as the triage centres for COVID-19 testing through screening clinics. In addition, the KNRC dispatches medical staff from Red Cross Hospitals to other public hospitals in Seoul, Daegu, and Gyeongsangbuk-do for extra support in treating COVID-19 patients. As of 18 October, 6,134 COVID-19 patients have been treated in KNRC hospitals, and 5,356 patients have been discharged.

**COVID-19 Immunization** – As an entrusted medical organization for COVID-19 vaccination, the KNRC has carried out its immunization program in six Red Cross hospitals (Seoul, Incheon, Sangju, Tongyeong, Geochang, and Yeongju) and facilitated vaccination drive across the country in line with the national immunization policy. By the end of September, a total of 54,997 people had been vaccinated through the KNRC hospitals. With the help of local government and volunteers, the KNRC also offered transportation services for those over 75 to get vaccinated.

**Relief activities** – The KNRC has been carrying out relief activities in compliance with the government's quarantine guidelines and social distancing. In response to the spread of COVID-19 across the country, the Red Cross volunteers have continuously participated in fever checking, hygiene and sanitization promotion, and assisted preliminary medical examinations. As of 31 July, the KNRC has distributed 38,704,974 masks, 764,275 hand sanitizers, 134,252 relief kits, 219,411 food items, 19,304 prevention kits and other medical supplies to vulnerable groups, medical personnel, homeless and small businesses. In response to the fourth wave of COVID-19, the KNRC delivered 400 daily necessities kits to the Armed Forces Medical Command in August for confirmed cases quarantined in the armed forces hospitals. In September, KNRC volunteers prepared and packaged 1,000 food parcels for those under self-quarantine.

**Psychosocial and other support** – During the hot summer of July and August, the KNRC distributed mineral and sports water and heatwave prevention kits to the medical personnel at COVID-19 Treatment Hospitals and screening centres. The KNRC Daegu Chapter held a joint birthday party to provide psychosocial support for 32 senior citizens living alone. In a campaign to share warmth through handwritten letters by the Jeju Chapter, 360 people sent letters through lunch boxes to their marginalized neighbours.

**Lao Red Cross**

As part of its epidemic control measures, the Lao Red Cross (LRC) is planning to conduct awareness campaign on Covid -19 in communities, quarantines centre and Migration check point in 6 branches/ provinces: Kammoun, Savanaket, Champasak, Sekong, Salavan and Attapeu by the end of October 2021.

LRC is also supporting the government in assisting migrant returnees in quarantine in 6 provinces Kammoun, Savanaket, Champasak, Sekong, Salavan and Attapeu. Lao Red Cross is supporting quarantine centers for migrant workers by:

- Providing assistance to maintain social distancing and queuing at the Lao Point of Entry (immigration check point), when returning migrants arrive there.
- By providing Covid-19 risk communication awareness, maintaining social distancing for Covid-19 testing and distributing food and non-food items to people in 12 quarantine centers.
- By conducting community work such as assisting for disinfection of infected person's house and surroundings.
- As of September 2021, Lao Red Cross is supporting a total of 5,883 migrant workers in the quarantine centers. LRC provided 50,698 food boxes for them.

**Malaysian Red Crescent Society**

The MRCS had in February 2021 developed a platform called MyVac to register volunteers nationwide and help deliver these trained volunteers to vaccination centres countrywide. MyVac had registered more than 320,000 volunteers. More than 13,000 volunteers were trained and more than 8,000 volunteers have been deployed to over 400 vaccination centres nationwide.



Mobile vaccination by MRCS. Photo: MRCS

In July, MRCS along with three other NGOs were entrusted to help vaccinate those bedridden and the disabled who were unable to go to vaccination centres to get inoculated. MRCS managed to visit more than 1,100 homes and administered more than 2,100 doses of vaccine in the Klang Valley. Currently MRCS is doing similar vaccination efforts in Penang and Kelantan. Subsequently, MRCS is working with a few District Health Centres to vaccinate 845 indigenous people or orang asli in 11 villages in Batang Padang and Lipis districts, Pahang state.

The role of MRCS was further expanded to help vaccinate the migrants, both documented and undocumented. MRCS has so far inoculated 200 Vietnamese, 750 migrants from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Thailand, plus another 950 migrants from Somalia, Yemen, and other nationalities.

**Maldivian Red Crescent Society**

The Maldivian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) has been represented in the national level taskforce convened to consolidate efforts on preparedness and response. It is part of the National Emergency Operations Centre, setup by the National Disaster Management Authority and the Health Protection Agency, supporting the coordination of ongoing response work and providing technical expertise for this. As an independent organization, with its outreach across the country, MRCS is working in close coordination with public authorities to fill the gaps as per the need and situation under the following domains and focus areas:

**Mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)** - MRCS is providing psychosocial support services (PSS) to migrants along with risk communication and community engagement activities. Support is being provided to rapid response teams while conducting mass inspections and monitoring. A total of 7,313 volunteers have been trained/oriented in psychosocial support and psychological first aid. The National Society has provided PSS helpline services through a toll-free number. A toll-free migrant support helpline has also been established by MRCS' Male branch

to provide assistance to migrants in need, especially to those living in hard-to reach areas. During 2021, this helpline has received 3,773 calls.

The "**Migrant Meal Provision Programme**" activity was resumed between February to end-August 2021, and 5,309 meals and 3,257 hygiene kits were distributed among migrants.

**Medical relief services** - MRCS teams have supported the rapid response teams of the Health Emergency Operation Centre in the movement of 740 COVID-19 positive patients (primarily elderly or bed-ridden patients) to treatment facilities (as of 31 August 2021). To address the challenges in blood supply during the COVID-19 pandemic, eight blood camps were organized between 01 January–31 August 2021, with 270 donors donating blood.

**Support for Immunization** - Since February 2021, MRCS has been supporting the Health Protection Agency in supporting the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination efforts in the Maldives. A total of 200 volunteers were mobilized to provide support at vaccination centres in Male', Addu and Haa Dhaal branches. They assisted with registration, managing queues, helping the elderly and those who needed assistance at these centres, registering of undocumented migrants and providing support to the Health Emergency Operations Centre. MRCS is also utilizing its vehicle fleet to carry out mobile vaccinations for bed-ridden and high-risk elderly patients living in the Greater Male' Region. Since the beginning of the nationwide vaccination campaign, 526 mobile vaccination trips have been carried out by MRCS' Male' branch.

**Marshall Island Red Cross Society**

In support of the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society (MIRCS) staff and volunteers assist national COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation efforts. A team of MIRCS volunteers and staff have been deployed with MoH vaccine teams in Majuro and Ebeye. The team has provided administrative support at vaccine sites, conducted household awareness on the COVID-19 vaccine, including referral information, and assisted 227 vulnerable individuals in accessing vaccines in Majuro and Ebeye.

MIRCS also continued COVID-19 vaccine awareness and key messaging in the community. In June and July, a team of 10 volunteers supported the vaccination rollout at Namu Atoll, registering individuals at vaccination sites. A total of three islands were visited (Majkin, Mae, Leon), where approximately 249 people were vaccinated and provided with information. The MIRCS staff nurse visited individuals with disabilities at their homes to administer the vaccine and promote COVID-19 awareness, ensuring no one is left behind. Hand soaps were also distributed to households in these communities.



*The MIRCS staff nurse administering COVID-19 vaccine. Photo: MIRCS*

In August and September, the Ministry of Health and Human Services (MOHHS), with the support of MIRCS first aid and health nurse, vaccinated 246 fisherfolk at Delap Dock and flew to remote Mejit Island to complete the second-dose vaccinations.

MIRCS volunteers visited nine schools to provide risk communications and community engagement (RCCE) on COVID-19 safety measures, including first aid demonstrations with the participation of 300 students. A team of volunteers distributed handwashing bags and soaps to students to encourage good hygiene practices.

**Micronesia Red Cross Society**

In support of the Government, Micronesia Red Cross Society (MRCS) has mobilized 60 staff and volunteers to support national COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation efforts. MRCS has assisted with risk communication, localization, translation, and dissemination of health messages and hygiene promotion in coordination with stakeholders.

In June, MRCS joined the Pohnpei State Taskforce and Municipal Taskforce in planning and implementing the COVID-19 vaccine programme in Kitti. MRCS assisted the vaccine taskforce by conducting household visits to disseminate

information on the vaccine, including referral to the vaccine site, while public health teams provided vaccinations. Through the vaccination campaign, MRCS reached 70% of Kitti's population or 1,456 households, out of which 815 people were vaccinated with their first or second dose. From July to September, the NS additionally supported the vaccination campaign in Kosrae State. MRCS volunteers reached communities with key messaging on COVID 19 vaccine and directed them to the vaccination sites. Approximately 505 children from 12-17 years and 42 adults were vaccinated. MRCS Chuuk Chapter engaged with communities in Eot and Romolum to deliver refresher training to 41 participants (12 male, 29 female) on COVID-19 and preventative measures. As part of this outreach, RC teams also engaged with community disaster teams to draft an action plan in the event of a COVID-19 case within the community.

MRCS, UNICEF and MoH collaborated to develop a survey on COVID-19 vaccination coverage and perceptions. The survey aimed to strengthen the COVID-19 vaccination efforts in Pohnpei and Kosrae by identifying unvaccinated populations and investigating the contributing factors. Over 70 volunteers were trained and deployed to conduct a rapid assessment survey among 2,511 households.

In Pohnpei, MRCS provided retrofitting faucets to 30 school tanks, and volunteers, together with school students, painted five water tanks with COVID-19 messages. The schools also received 539 handwashing buckets. Volunteers distributed COVID-19 awareness posters to 41 schools, targeting 9,179 students (4,729 males and 4,480 females). These posters aimed to promote healthy actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.



Volunteers ready to distribute COVID-19 awareness posters to schools. Source: MRCS

**Mongolian Red Cross Society**

Mongolia suffered its third wave of COVID-19 starting from August 2021. The MRCS continues to work with many different partners to cover the urgent needs identified in its revised National Society Response Plan.

**Volunteer capacity building**

In August and September, supported and funded by IFRC, Ministry of Health and other partners, the MRCS trained 400 Red Cross volunteers from 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar on infectious disease surveillance. The training covers briefing on the history and development of RCRC and MRCS, ethics and role of volunteers, COVID-19 control and prevention system, infectious disease prevention and surveillance system, PSS in emergencies, etc.

On September 8-9, 2021, in cooperation with the NCCD, the MRCS organized an online training on infectious disease surveillance for around 200 volunteers from the Red Cross mid-level branches of 21 provinces. These trained volunteers started working to support provincial emergency commission and health departments.



The training on infectious disease surveillance for MRCS volunteers was organized. Source: MRCS

**Close contact tracing and surveillance**

Starting from the early of July, MRCS volunteers started to work with the Field Epidemiology team at the hotlines centre of the National Centre for Communicable Disease (NCCD) to track close contacts and conduct surveillance to the infected people under home isolation.

After the training organized in August and September, these 400 trained volunteers have been working at the NCCD and 112 Family health centres in the capital city, conducting surveillance and research, providing support, and delivering health packages to the confirmed cases in districts of the capital.

### Support the COVID-19 Immunization

The MRCS continues to train volunteers to conduct vaccination awareness session through phone call to facilitate people to get vaccination, disseminate vaccination promotion information to herders at the remote area, and provide support at vaccination centers.

#### Myanmar Red Cross Society

During the reporting period, Myanmar was hit by the fastest and worst increase of cases since the beginning of the pandemic. By the end of September, a total of 465,000 people in the country had tested positive for COVID-19 and nearly 18,000 deaths had been recorded, with a significant proportion of these since July during the peak of the wave. With this 'third wave' of cases rapidly overwhelming the already strained health system, one of the areas of most acute needs was in oxygen therapy, with serious gaps faced in supplies necessary to provide lifesaving help for those experiencing the most serious effects of COVID-19.

The MRCS responded to this gap and helped deliver urgently needed oxygen therapy supplies – such as oxygen cylinders and concentrators – to health centres, communities and families most in need, benefitting at least 2,800 people directly. This was made possible through support from the IFRC as well as other MRCS partners. This is in addition to the more than 81,000 people supported living under quarantine measures, nearly 585,000 people supported in receiving COVID-19 vaccination doses, and over 19,400 people transported by ambulance services during the same period.

As the number of cases continued to drop by the end of the reporting period, MRCS focus will be continued provision of inputs to prioritized areas: sustaining Health and WASH, tackling socio-economic impacts to assist and support vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19 including building their resilience, including:

- Pre-positioning stocks of essential protective consumables in central and regional branches
- Necessary technical and capacity strengthening of MRCS staff and RCVs
- Improved access to essential WASH services and interventions designed to change hygiene practices in most vulnerable areas such as schools and quarantine sites
- Participate in ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines with equitability and fairness to reach the community via local and international collaboration
- Contribution in oxygen support: provision of oxygen cylinder and delivery service to the community in need and planning to have appropriate oxygen source: oxygen plants, in easy, accessible areas.

#### Nepal Red Cross Society

The first case of COVID-19 infection was detected in Nepal in January 2020. The second wave of COVID-19 infection hit the country in February 2021 reached the peak in May and started to decrease afterwards. As of 21 October 2021, 901,293 people have tested positive out of which 784,881 have recovered and 11,326 people have lost their life due to COVID related complications. Although the latest surge seems to be subsiding, there is a concern that the festival season in October and November, when a large number of people will return back to their hometown either from abroad or from bigger cities of Nepal, might result in another wave of COVID-19 in Country. The Government has lifted the lockdowns and/or prohibitory orders given the small number of people testing positive in recent days which could also lead to an increase in cases.

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has been implementing its COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Operation since January 2020 with the support of IFRC and its membership. The IFRC and its membership have procured and supplied more than 291 oxygen concentrators for the Government and NRCS and other medical supplies, including 2,470 oximeters, 1,000 dead body bags, 17 ventilators and 600 oxygen cylinders. More than 10 tonnes



NRCS volunteers distributing IEC material on COVID-19 protection and prevention considering the starting of the festival season in October and November. Photo: NRCS

of personal protective equipment (PPE) have been handed over to NRCS to protect Red Cross essential workers and promote community members' safety. Red Cross further distributes life-saving medical equipment and supplies to protect essential health workers at district hospitals and local health posts.

The Government of Nepal has started a vaccination campaign in February 2021. As of 21 October 2021, 8.5 million people (29.5 per cent of the total population) have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and 6.5 million people (22.4 per cent of the total population) have received the full dose of vaccines. NRCS has been mobilizing around 3,900 volunteers to support the COVID-19 response, out of which 500 volunteers are supporting the vaccination centres for the centres' management and WASH purposes.

NRCS has reached 127,609 people through infection prevention and control measures and WASH activities in the communities, Point of Entries, quarantine and Isolations sites. In addition to this, 4,469 people were reached by the Red Cross trained staff and volunteers on MHPSS. Furthermore, NRCS has reached 2.7 million people with the Red Cross CEA activities through the operation, including mass messaging, door-to-door visits and distribution of IEC materials on COVID-19 prevention and protection.

### **Pakistan Red Crescent Society**

Pakistan has been experiencing its fourth wave from July 2021 onwards, after a short-lived decrease in June after recovering from the third wave. The daily cases count had risen to 4,934 cases in August, with the highest positivity rate reported at 9.06 per cent. Maximizing vaccination efforts and increasing restrictions imposed by the government during the period have resulted in a decrease in cases from late September onwards.

Aligning with the national priority and directly contributing to the government's response, Pakistan Red Crescent Society PRCS continues to expand its vaccination efforts across the country with the establishment of two static vaccination centres, 12 mobile vaccination units and engagement of volunteers and ambulances to support government centres. PRCS has reached a total of 191,061 people directly through vaccine administration, out of which 99,848 are completely vaccinated and 91,213 are partially vaccinated. The National Society is in the process of further expanding its efforts through the support of the Humanitarian Buffer to reach marginalized population groups such as migrants, refugees and internally displaced people who are currently not covered under the ongoing national vaccination campaign.

Alongside vaccination administration, PRCS continues to address vaccination hesitancy, maximizing its usage of its volunteer force, community engagement and accountability mechanisms and social media presence to address the population's concerns and advocate for vaccine administration. Volunteers trained in psychosocial support have also been deployed, providing preliminary consultations in the field addressing the community mental wellbeing.

Response efforts also continue to focus on mitigating spread through awareness building and the practise of preventive measures in daily life. An additional 228 latrines, 200 hand sanitizing booths and 165 hand washing stations have been installed across eight districts in the country at high foot traffic public locations to increase accessibility to the practise of good hygiene on a daily basis. Furthermore, 50 oxygen concentrators and PPEs were also procured through IFRC and are in the process of being distributed to government facilities and internal National Society use based on need.

### **Palau Red Cross**

Palau Red Cross Society (PRCS) has been implementing COVID-19 activities through its headquarters in Koror with the remote support of two newly established branches, mobilizing approximately 110 staff and volunteers. In July 2021, PRCS disseminated 1,000 information education and communication (IEC) materials to promote the importance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine dose on behalf of MoH.

The PRCS organized the Red Cross Disaster Action Teams Training (RDAT) with 65 participants from 13 states, including state, women, and youth representatives. Participants were trained on epidemic control, including COVID-19 preventative measures and hygiene promotion, which will assist them to support their communities in preparedness for COVID-19 and other disasters.

In September, 2,498 people were also reached through risk communication, community engagement, and health and hygiene promotion during the Palau National Preparedness Month Fair.

### Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society

The Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society has been implementing its COVID-19 response by distributing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to medical facilities and organizing community awareness-raising activities. Trained and equipped with PPE, PNG Red Cross staff and volunteers support efforts to provide accurate and reliable public health information about COVID-19 across 13 provinces through their branches and volunteers networks.

The overall PNGRCS COVID-19 response operation has reached 75,159 people (38,979 males and 36,180 females). It focuses on risk communication, community engagement (RCCE) and PPE distribution. The indirect beneficiaries of 601,272 are based on an estimated 5% of the province's population that the PNGRCS targets.

To respond to the escalating COVID-19 situation, PNGRCS has procured 636,000 surgical masks, 65,000 examination gloves, 360 infrared thermometers, and 24,000 hand sanitizer units. The procurement received support from the Australian Red Cross, the IFRC and funding from the Australian Government and the Coca Cola Foundation. The PNGRCS will distribute these goods to available medical facilities and branches across PNG's four regions through the Coca-Cola Amatil PNG's logistics network.



The PNGRCS volunteers conducted door to door COVID-19 awareness in Port Moresby. Source: IFRC

### Philippine Red Cross

Between July and September, PRC mobilized medical tents to augment the surge of cases in Pangasinan, Benguet and Davao del Sur. In terms of operationalization of molecular laboratory, a molecular laboratory has started its operation in Cotabato last 18 September, 2021. This facility has been supported by ICRC. Key achievements of Philippine Red Cross include:

- The PRC has set up **107 medical field tents**, which served as a staging, isolation wards were set up in different parts of the country with **234,660** people served. PRC also set-up 5 isolation facilities in Metro Manila as well the mobilization of emergency field hospital.
- Administered **284,869 vaccinations**: 209,524 through Bakuna Center and 75,345 through Bakuna Bus
- Ambulances are continuously mobilized to support DOH with the transportation of suspected and confirmed with COVID-19 individuals. A total of **3,335** suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases were catered.
- The Convalescent Plasma Center in Port Area were able to collect **1,137 units** and served 1,099 patients from 112 hospitals.
- The PRC is operating its **molecular laboratories in 13 areas nationwide**. As of 22 September, 2022, PRC tested **4,337,404 specimens** using RT PCR machines.
- To date, **10.4 million people** were reached with health and hygiene awareness activities.



The Philippine Red Cross volunteers are crossing muddy terrain and bodies of water to reach people in the island and isolated areas to deliver lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines. Photo: PRC

### Samoa Red Cross Society

Through its auxiliary role to the Government of Samoa, the Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) collaborates with the Ministry of Health to support COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Approximately 52 volunteers have been deployed with the MoH team at 23 vaccination sites, providing first aid standby, crowd management, community mobilization, and monitoring people following vaccinations. Volunteers have engaged with 5,400 individuals from different communities to provide information on the vaccine and address misinformation.

From June to September 2021, SRCS organized blood drives to maintain blood supply throughout the pandemic. The National Society collected blood from 2,447 individuals. The SRCS has conducted WASH awareness in targeted communities and schools to educate people on good hygiene practices to halt the spread of COVID-19. WASH and RCCE materials, and demonstrations on COVID-19 safety measures reached 26 villages from Faleasi'u-Falelatai, Safata district and Anoama'a district. Nofolii Primary School and Kindergarten students received COVID-19 basic hygiene and first aid demonstrations and 20 hygiene kits. To expand the capacity of SRCS to respond in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak, 36 new volunteers and staff have completed training in WASH, correct use of PPE, epidemic control for volunteers, first aid, psychosocial first aid and blood donor recruitment.

### Solomon Islands Red Cross Society

Solomon Islands Red Cross Society (SIRCS) has been working very closely with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) and the National Disaster Arrangement and Intergovernmental Organisations, NGOs and the communities to support COVID-19 preparedness. With technical support from IFRC and the Australian Red Cross, the health team has been instrumental in ensuring coordination, information sharing and staff and volunteer training in institutional preparedness.

An achievement worth noting is the tremendous effort of the SIRCS health team in institutionalizing a well-informed, systematic Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV) and COVID-19 training to equip volunteers. SIRCS now has 75 trained volunteers supporting the MHMS in Honiara. The volunteers also assist in provincial risk communication and vaccine rollout awareness. The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands acknowledged the positive work of Red Cross Volunteer Support during the first National Lockdown Simulation in Honiara. Following this, volunteers were requested to participate in the second National Lockdown Simulation preparation for the COVID-19 Delta variant. 30 volunteers and staff were involved in the various scenarios to test the revised SOPs. Volunteers have now been requested to provide administrative support such as registration in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. This also includes Community Preparedness and Response Planning in rural communities.

#### **"Our Volunteers needs more awareness around COVID 19 vaccine"**

"Our local communities need more awareness around the COVID-19 vaccine. They have a lot of questions regarding the vaccine that need to be answered. Once they understand the vaccine and its role in keeping people safe in this time of COVID-19, especially with the delta variant, people will come forward to get their jab", said Mr. Neitai Kaituú, Solomon Islands Red Cross Society community engagement officer and volunteer.



*Neitai explaining use of PPE at Kochachai Community, Guadalcanal Province. Source: SIRCS*

### Singapore Red Cross

From June to September, Singapore Red Cross (SRC) continues its efforts to respond to those affected by the pandemic both locally and internationally. In the home front, Red Cross volunteers distributed 1,032 boxes of surgical masks to residents staying in the Western part of Singapore. SRC also continued with programmes to reach out to low-income families that were adversely hit by COVID-19 by supporting 75 families with food vouchers, and establishing an interim centre to reach out to youth-at-risk from these low-income families. Internationally, SRC concluded its COVID-19 response efforts to India, with a total of 205 ventilators, 3000 10L oxygen concentrators, 960 oxygen cylinders, 245,600 surgical masks and 2000 flowmeters being distributed to at least 10 states in India. SRC also extended its international response efforts to other countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa, mainly focusing on the purchase of oxygen supplies to these countries.

**Sri Lanka Red Cross Society**

SLRCS has been responding to the pandemic from its onset in accordance with the dynamics of the pandemic's impact on the country. During the period from mid-June to mid-October 2021, Sri Lanka recorded 305,000 new COVID-19 cases.

As of 20 October 2021, there are 26,088 active cases. The daily new infections have come down from 2,334 to 442 per day in the last four months.

**Support for Immunization:** The Government of Sri Lanka speeded up the COVID-19 immunization among citizens all over the country and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) facilitated the vaccine roll out programme in 15 districts out of the 25 districts. SLRCS medical assistant volunteers were deployed in community vaccination centres to support the medical staff for administration work, data entries, vaccination and clinical waste handling processes. Besides vaccine centre facilitation, SLRCS provided mobile vaccination support by offering transport facilities for vulnerable community members who were unable to reach vaccination centres and medical staff who visited the disabled and elderly unreachable for COVID-19 immunization.



SLRCS volunteers provide transport support to vaccination centre for patients in need. Photo: SLRCS

**Medical Relief services:** While assisting with the vaccination campaign, SLRCS volunteers were also deployed in hospitals, intermediate care centres and quarantine centres to assist medical staff and patients. They supported administrative work, patient management, data entry and the distance treating process. During the distant treatment programme, medicine was packed and prepared to post patients since the regular clinics were temporarily closed at that time. To connect the patients with their respective doctors, SLRCS volunteers worked tirelessly at the pharmacies and the telephone operating centres within the hospitals. Similarly, in partnership with UBER Taxi company, SLRCS provided free rides for frontline health workers and patients who visited both hospitals and vaccine centres.

**Risk communication, community engagement, and health and hygiene promotion:** In addition, more than 6.7 million people have been educated up to now while assisting behavioural change focused on three rules of COVID-19 prevention: physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene. Meanwhile, people were made aware of the importance of the COVID-19 vaccination by the National Society's Social Behavioural Change Communication campaign through public announcements, IEC material distribution, social media posts, and so on. Furthermore, SLRCS donated personal protective equipment and medical equipment to hospitals, such as oxygen concentrators, pulse oximeters, or thermo guns, and engaged in continuous transmission risk reduction activities, such as disinfection, in public places during the period.

**Thai Red Cross Society**

The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic continues to be the primary focus of TRCS and will be for the foreseeable future. Although the daily reported cases are decreasing, the slow pace of vaccinations remains.

TRCS has mobilized a large volunteer force of over 4000 people including more than 200 doctors and 350 nurses to vaccinate the public. They have been carrying out the vaccinations in collaboration with local health agencies. TRCS aims to vaccinate at least 5,000 migrant workers.

TRCS is also providing 'tele-medicine' support to people who are in Home Isolation and are registered in the tele-medicine system in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakarn and Pathum Thani Provinces. After patients with COVID-19 are diagnosed, they receive medical check-ups twice daily



Cooked food and other essentials being delivered to the doorstep for people in home isolation. Source: TRCS

through the system and cooked food is delivered to their doorstep along with a digital thermometer, fingertip pulse oximeter and basic medicines. 16,027 patients have received assistance through this system.

IFRC handed over two buses that will function as mobile blood collection units, to the Thai Red Cross Society. TRCS has provided nearly 1 million masks for the public including for migrants (both adults and kids) along with a relief kit that includes alcohol gel, IEC information packs translated into Burmese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese, leaflets, etc.

### **Tuvalu Red Cross Society**

TRCS volunteers and staff have been working closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) vaccination teams to disseminate key information on the vaccine, assist at vaccine sites and collect data on adverse effects from immunization. The TRCS has also been deployed in the outer islands with MoH teams to ensure remote communities access the vaccine. People have been assisted in the vaccination roll out in the islands of Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Nui, Vaitupu, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Nukulaelae and Niulakita. The TRCS works closely with MoH to mobilize and recruit donors to maintain the national blood supply, and 90.8% of the eligible donors have been fully vaccinated.

Volunteers and staff have been trained in community engagement and accountability for COVID-19 and the vaccine. Volunteers shared information through house-to-house visits, distributed posters to public places and schools, and conducted handwashing demonstrations in schools, communities, and faith-based organizations. Around 1,694 people were reached through these activities.

From June to September 2021, mass media campaigns promoting the COVID-19 vaccination campaign were launched via TV, social media and radio. Despite the rise of digital communication, radio remains the most widely used media, and a talk-back radio show, Boom-Box, provides essential updates and information on COVID19. During the segment, listeners are encouraged to engage through questions and feedback.



*A volunteer doing a household registration for vaccine uptake. Photo: TRCS*

International travellers are required to complete mandatory quarantine at a government isolation facility on arrival in Tuvalu. In response to the surge of the Delta variant in neighbouring countries, the Tuvalu Government extended the quarantine period and imposed stringent movement restrictions. To relieve stress and lower mental health risks, individuals held in quarantine facilities received support from 25 TRCS volunteers and staff trained in psychological first aid. The ECV training further helped volunteers understand COVID-19 and its spread, as well as methods to prevent and control the outbreak.

### **Vanuatu Red Cross Society**

The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) staff and volunteers support the Provincial Health Team with COVID-19 vaccination rollout in the targeted provinces of Shefa, Sanma, Tafea, and Malampa. In each province, VRCS volunteers are embedded in mobile vaccination teams. To ensure the vaccine is accessible to everyone, the COVID-19 mobile teams help people reach vaccination sites, including the elderly or people with disabilities.

The VRCS has provided communication support to the MoH to reach individuals overdue for vaccination in Shefa and Sanma Province. Along with monitoring and surveillance support in Port Vila and Shefa Province, the National Society also supports four provinces with COVID-19 vaccine data entry and vaccine registration. An MoU was signed between MoH and VRCS to strengthen collaboration on COVID-19 and other community health awareness programmes.

VRCS has provided various support at the national level, including full-time volunteers who manage risk communication at the national vaccination site, support monitoring and surveillance operations at MoH and operate the COVID-19 Call Centre. The National Society also attends monthly National Immunization Coordination Committee (NICC) meetings and has participated in Four COVID-19 simulation exercises in Port Vila.

At the provincial and community level, VRCS continues to reach communities with RCCE, hygiene promotion and COVID-19 vaccine awareness. VRCS Health Awareness Vests (visibility material) has been distributed to all six provinces. Between June to September, nine consultation meetings with local stakeholders such as chiefs, church leaders, youth, women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI groups have further strengthened community engagement in the vaccination campaign. The National Society has also actively promoted COVID-19 hygiene awareness in focus communities and schools in four provinces. By distributing COVID-19 hygiene promotion and IEC materials in communities and schools, the VRCS volunteers have reached 6,000 individuals.

Training and capacity building activities have scaled up VRCS preparedness to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks. Up to 98 volunteers and staff received training on RCCE, infection prevention and control (IPC), ECV, COVID-19 vaccine, hygiene promotion, data entry and registration for COVID-19, and Public Health in Emergency (PHiE). In the meantime, A COVID-19 lockdown tabletop simulation exercise in Port Vila, Shefa, built the National Society's response capacity.



*Red Cross volunteers assisting senior citizens and people with disabilities to receive their first dose of the vaccine.  
Source: VRCS*

### **Viet Nam Red Cross Society**

Viet Nam has faced its highest levels of community infection since 27 April until September when thousands of cases have been reported on a daily basis. The hardest hit cities are Ho Chi Minh, Dong Nai, and Binh Duong. Slow vaccination rates have compounded the problem. Currently [19.2%](#) of the population have received one dose of the vaccine.

Lockdown have now been partially eased in many parts of the country which has enabled migrant workers from other provinces to leave the cities after four months of home lockdown with little or no access to services and support. IFRC CCD has been working with VNRC to develop a plan of action to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic as well as provide support to internal migrant workers who are leaving the main cities for their homes.

VNRC continues to conduct fund raising activities nationwide targeting the private sector. At least VND 10 billion (CHF 400,000) has been raised from May to July and allocated to the most vulnerable communities to procure essential items. Some in-kind donations of masks and milk have also been done.

Massive risk communication campaigns have been held on various channels including social media to reach over 1 million people through 9,549 news, articles and broadcasts. VNRC has organized 'humanitarian marketplaces' to provide food and non-food items to almost 50,000 people in 27 worst affected provinces.

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