

IOM SOUTH CAUCASUS COVID-19 RESPONSE



February - December 2020



Women sewing face masks at the shelter for victims of trafficking and domestic violence of Temiz Dunya Public Union in Baku mitigate the shortage of face masks in Azerbaijan in March 2020. IOM Azerbaijan

**IOM Appeal
for South Caucasus
(USD)
TOTAL
.....
3.725 M**

beneficiaries total per category

10,150

Returned migrants and individuals in mobility-dependent communities

9,600

Stranded migrants in vulnerable situations

620

Border and police staff

SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 31 December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia of unknown origin was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China. On 11 March, the Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the illness known as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic. As of 22 April, more than 2.47 million cases and over 169,000 deaths have been reported worldwide¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in travel restrictions bringing international mobility to a standstill. As of 22 April, over 47,000 restrictions on mobility have been put into effect by governments worldwide in order to contain and reduce the spread of COVID-19.²

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the countries of the South Caucasus, share significant vulnerabilities and needs in fostering migrant-inclusive response, supporting migrants in vulnerable situations while mitigating the expected socio-economic impact of the pandemic on highly migration-dependent populations. Migrant and mobile populations bear a high risk of infection due to a number of risks they are exposed to, as well as being more vulnerable to the broader social and economic impacts of COVID-19. For these reasons, a migrant-inclusive approach is crucial in the South Caucasus

countries' response to the pandemic. The widespread economic shutdown and longer-term economic challenges will negatively impact returnees' and migrants' earnings and critically affect the well-being of families and communities dependent on remittances. With loss of income, or illness as a result of the crisis, migrants and their families may be pushed into vulnerable or exploitative situations.

This Appeal is consistent with, and expands upon, IOM's Global [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan \(SPRP\)](#) by providing further details on IOM's planned COVID-19 response in the South Caucasus. In line with the IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, the Appeal prioritizes national responses to the COVID-19 crisis and its immediate and mid-term socio-economic impact on migrants returning from abroad to their communities who are now facing acute livelihood challenges, as well as the third country nationals stranded in the South Caucasus countries. All three countries continue to tighten mobility and socio-economic restrictions, relying on extraordinary powers granted to them by the declaration of emergency status. This Appeal fully aims to support the existing national response plans in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia³.

1 [WHO COVID-19 Situation Dashboard](#), accessed on 22 April 2020

2 [COVID-19 Mobility Impacts portal](#), accessed on 22 April 2020

3 The COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan for Azerbaijan, and the Anti-Crisis Economic Recovery Plan for Georgia.

SUPPORTING IMMEDIATE MIGRANT-INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

The countries of the South Caucasus host hundreds of thousands of migrants in regular and irregular situations predominantly from Central Asia, but also from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and countries of South-East Asia and West Africa. Due to both real and perceived legal precarity of both regular and irregular migrants, as well as regulatory and practical barriers, they are less likely to seek health services, including getting tested for COVID-19. It is critical to ensure that information on risks and recommendations reach migrant communities in a timely manner and in a language they understand. This will ensure the effectiveness of the crisis response, in particular that migrants feel safe and secure to seek and access health and protection services when needed.

Furthermore, assistance is needed across all points of entry (PoE), in supporting border and patrol forces to manage emergency-regime mobility operations, as well as in preparations for a safe future gradual re-opening of mobility corridors.

PROTECTING MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

In a region marked by significant migration flows, regular and irregular, including cases of migrant smuggling and various forms of exploitation, the COVID-19 crisis raises severe concerns for the safety of migrants in vulnerable situations. Many migrants facing disruption to travel plans, loss of income, or illness as a result of the crisis may be pushed into vulnerable or exploitative situations. In addition, unprecedented travel restrictions will have resulted in significant numbers of grounded and stranded migrants. Simultaneously, low-skilled and migrants in irregular situations are the least likely to access services provided by the host government, be it due to ineligibility for support, lack of information, or fear of interaction with local authorities. It is key to identify the most vulnerable amongst the migrant population, assess their needs and provide emergency relief where critically needed, provide counselling, as well as assistance to those who wish to return to their countries of origin.

MITIGATING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LOCAL MOBILITY-DEPENDENT POPULATION

Mass returns of migrants from Europe, Turkey, the Middle East, and the Russian Federation far exceed the capacity of local economies and governments to support returning citizens in re-establishing themselves and their livelihoods in their country of origin. Furthermore, a large proportion of the population in the South Caucasus relies on income facilitated by mobility — remittances sent by family members working abroad and income from circular or seasonal migration frequently form a livelihood strategy. This income has been severely diminished or interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many migrants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia need to channel savings to cover their daily needs in host countries and are unable to continue supporting their families back home. Many decided to repatriate in face of insecurity or inability to stay. According to official statistics capturing formal COVID-19 repatriation channels under the auspices of governments, more than 7,600 Georgian migrants, over 63,000 Armenian migrants, and over 10,000 Azerbaijani migrants returned to the South Caucasus since the beginning of the crisis. Real figures are likely to be much higher, considering returns by land or returns realized prior to the ban on commercial airline flights, and translate directly into a number of migrant households in the region with severely or fully suspended incomes due to the COVID-19. Further thousands of migrants from the South Caucasus who are stranded abroad and waiting to return to their countries of origin.

Most regions in Armenia and Georgia have long been experiencing massive emigration⁴ and loss of human capital, witnessing market deterioration, further destabilizing communities already affected by persistent poverty, environmental risks, and lack of opportunities. Mass returns thus bring migrants back to communities characterized by economic insecurity in the form of chronic underemployment and unemployment and lack of access to economic opportunities. The population thus faces critical socio-economic difficulties, exacerbated by mass returns, with little hope of finding alternative means of livelihood locally and no support for responding to the unforeseen lack of income in the current economic slowdown. It is critical to mitigate the socio-economic impacts on and create new livelihood opportunities for local mobility-dependent population across the South Caucasus.

⁴ For example, the Georgian population has decreased by 1.7 million in the last three decades mainly due to emigration.

IOM'S APPROACH AND OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

IOM is working to ensure that a well-coordinated, comprehensive, equitable, and timely response to the crisis is underway to halt further transmission of the disease, limit the humanitarian and socio-economic effects of the pandemic, and support affected communities to prepare for longer term-recovery. IOM's approach to preparing for and responding to disease outbreaks is anchored in IOM's Health, Border and Mobility Management framework. The framework links an understanding of population mobility with disease surveillance and provides a platform to develop country-specific and multi-country interventions, emphasizing health system strengthening along mobility corridors in line with the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR).

IOM's revised SPRP comes out of the necessity to align IOM's full spectrum of work with the impact of COVID-19 worldwide. The plan evolved from IOM's previous SPRP and encompasses new areas such as the socio-economic impacts of the crisis, while remaining aligned with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19, launched on 25 March 2020. The revised

plan is also aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and its upcoming revision, the forthcoming UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, and country-level Preparedness and Response Plans (PRP). With this revised plan, IOM aims to demonstrate its capacity to tackle the pandemic as an organization that can respond to the acute health and multi-sectoral needs of affected populations and communities of concern, while also implementing programmes to mitigate and address the longer term socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

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

IOM'S AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Strategic Priority 1:

Ensure a well-coordinated, informed and timely response through mobility tracking systems and strengthening partnership and coordination structures established at the community, national and regional levels.

Coordination and Partnerships

IOM continues actively participating in overall coordination mechanisms at all levels, in particular cross-border coordination through:

- Developing operational guidance and assistance to the Governments for on-going emergency consular and other related activities.
- Strengthening cross-border coordination and enhancing mechanisms for regional and national information sharing and mechanisms to assist stranded and vulnerable migrants.
- Strengthening cross-border coordination and enhancing mechanisms for future controlled re-opening of mobility corridors
- Supporting national governments to facilitate access to emergency health care for migrants, including identifying temporary legal solutions for access to medical care.
- Engaging and supporting inter-agency efforts to develop national and regional preparedness and response plans through contingency planning processes.
- Lead and support regional and national coordination on advocacy for prevention of stigma towards migrants, persons on the move and other forces to do so and become vulnerable.

Funding requirement

USD 225,000

Tracking Mobility Impacts

As movement across borders continues to be affected, IOM's capacity to provide data and analysis on population mobility dynamics remains crucial for a more targeted and evidence-based response. IOM will contribute to providing a comprehensive understanding of the effect of COVID-19 on mobility at global, country, and cross-border/interregional level by:

- Mapping of mobility restrictions, including visa and entry/exit requirements.
- Mapping, monitoring, and analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on migrants and other populations of concern whose situation have been affected by the pandemic, ensuring that their needs are taken into account in the overall response, including critical analysis to inform the medium- and longer-term response to the broader socio-economic dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Tracking, monitoring, and analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on internally displaced persons (IDPs), capitalizing on the global footprint of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

Funding requirement

USD 250,000

surveying 1,000 migrants and returnees in vulnerable situations, their families, and communities

Strategic Priority 2:

Contribute to global, regional, national and community preparedness and response efforts for COVID-19 to reduce associated morbidity and mortality.

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

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

- Establishing a repository of products and practices for migrant-inclusive communications, including the development and translation of standard messages for migrants on recommended measures and rights to assistance.
- Engaging migration authorities in RCCE activities at points of entry to disseminate information, prevention advice, and advice on when and how to seek health care.
- Supporting community-level awareness-raising in close coordination with municipal authorities in border communities, as well as training of municipal officials and community members on prevention and preparedness measures and on using appropriate medical and physical precautions.
- Raising awareness of migrants and population at large on health-related issues, including COVID-19, through social media campaigns.

Funding requirement

USD 200,000

reaching 8000 foreign citizens, 5000 returnees and families

Disease surveillance

Migration and mobility are increasingly recognized as determinants of health and risk exposure and IOM plays a key role in linking an understanding of population mobility with disease surveillance. IOM will continue to enhance existing national level disease surveillance systems through:

- Strengthening community event-based surveillance by linking mobility information to disease surveillance data, particularly among border communities, at points of entry, in migrant dense areas and displacement sites.
- Engaging with national authorities and local communities in strengthened data collection and conducting participatory mapping exercises to identify high-risk transmission mobility corridors and areas, to inform regional and national preparedness and response plans.

Funding requirement

USD 200,000

Logistics, procurement, and supply management

IOM will handle logistics, procurement of necessary supplies based on the needs of migrants and relevant border authorities, in coordination with the Pandemic Supply Chain Network (PSCN), the Supply Chain Interagency Coordination Cell and national-level coordination mechanisms, through:

- Engaging with national authorities and UN partners to support the procurement, storage and distribution of critical supplies such as PPE (gloves, masks, sanitizers etc.)
- Supporting the Supply Chain Management with existing IOM operational capacities from ongoing programmes.

Funding requirement

USD 650,000

Points of entry (PoE)

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

- Providing essential personal protection equipment (PPE), such as masks, gloves, goggles, aprons, and gumboots.
- Providing screening equipment and rapid-tests for COVID-19 (handheld non-contact thermometers, thermal scanners etc.) at PoEs.
- Providing emergency, quick-impact training for border officials on detection, screening, registration, isolation, and referral of suspected and sick travelers, as well as occupational health and safety.
- Developing standard operating procedures on the detection, screening and management of suspected and sick travelers, including self-protection.
- Providing vehicles and equipment to facilitate transport of suspected and sick travelers to a quarantine or health facility.
- Conducting refurbishment of isolation facilities at PoEs.
- Providing information materials (banners, leaflets etc.) on symptoms of COVID-19, as well as self-protection practices, in several languages to be prominently displayed at PoEs.
- Supporting active surveillance, including health screening, communication, referral, and data collection at PoE and green border.
- Securing provision of safe water for drinking and handwashing, adequate sanitation facilities and waste management systems.

Funding requirement

USD 850,000

reaching 400 border police staff

Strategic Priority 3:

Ensure access of affected people to basic services and commodities, including health care, and protection and social services.

Protection

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

- Assisting stranded and migrants in vulnerable situations in accessing services adapted to their specific needs, including shelter, food, life-saving primary health care, procurement of critical medicines, and medical supplies.
- Strengthening existing protection mechanisms and social services, including across borders, to identify and support persons in need of care or protection and refer them to appropriate services, e.g. alternative care, emergency support or assistance, social services.

Funding requirement

USD 650,000

reaching 700 migrants in vulnerable situations, 2000 returnees in vulnerable situations

- Identifying and providing tailored protection and assistance services to victims of trafficking, separated and unaccompanied children, and other migrants in vulnerable situations whose current case plans have been disrupted by the crisis and update planning.
- Collating case data and generating regular statistical snapshots on the number of migrants (foreigners) requesting assistance, the types of vulnerabilities and exploitative practices identified, the types of services needed.
- Establishing a centralized fund to review and respond to requests for support for migrants in vulnerable situations using IOM's established procedures for migrants' reintegration.
- Developing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) self-help tools tailored explicitly for stranded migrant populations in quarantine as well as the deployment of psychosocial mobile teams able to serve those populations.
- Advocating for the inclusion of migrants and returnees in on-going preparedness and response plans to avoid stigmatization.
- Provision of return assistance for stranded migrants

Strategic Priority 4:

Support international, national and local partners to respond to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Addressing socio-economic impacts

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

- Conducting a rapid analysis, in partnership with specialized UN, financial organizations and multilateral development banks, to assess the immediate impact of unfolding economic, environmental, financial and social disruptions on migrants, their families and host communities; working with the private sector and other partners in finding solutions to sustain affordable and formal cross-border remittance flows.
- Strengthening tools to monitor the secondary impacts of COVID-19 on development-driven mobility dynamics and trends at the national and regional level, and in turn, their implications for achieving Sustainable Development Goals and objectives of the Paris Agreement, in coordination with humanitarian, development and climate change actors.

Funding requirement

USD 700,000

reaching 1,250 returnees in vulnerable situations and their families, and communities

- Identifying and piloting efficient and scalable mechanisms for the mobilization of health and other relevant professionals within diaspora and broader migrant communities to contribute to COVID-19 response and recovery, including as related to social and economic development, with a focus on developing countries.
- Enhancing commitment and capacity of employers and labour recruiters to protect migrant workers, including seasonal workers, during the pandemic by identifying and disseminating good practices, strengthening dialogue and coordination between recruiters and employers, and stimulating business action in global supply chains to effectively protect migrant worker health, well-being and rights.
- Prioritizing livelihoods and job creation in communities affected by disrupted mobility and loss of remittance income through financial support to small and medium enterprises to rapidly resume operations and create sustainable or green jobs as sectors of the economy gradually resume their activities. Financial investment will target strategic economic sectors, sectors that are labor-intensive and sectors disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and provide incentivize green transition as part of pandemic recovery.
- Community re-vitalization initiatives aimed at generating local employment opportunities, with a special focus on green economy, and access to services in regions experiencing COVID-19 related mass returns of labour migrants

IOM'S REGIONAL CAPACITY AND APPROACH TO RESPOND

IOM stands ready to assist Member States and partners to prepare and respond to the pandemic with operational and technical support. IOM has extensive experience in responding to the mobility aspects of crises and supporting communities to recover, along with its broad portfolio of migration management including in supporting governments and communities to prevent, detect, and respond to health threats along the mobility continuum while advocating for migrant-inclusive approaches that minimize stigma and discrimination. IOM works with Member States and Governments to identify appropriate border management practices and procedures inclusive of health measures that allow for gradual and safe re-opening of borders.

IOM is uniquely placed to provide support in international public health emergencies, with 95 staff members in 11 offices across Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, including sub-offices outside capitals. Working across thematic areas including health, development, and border management, among others, IOM has contributed to migration management in the South Caucasus through long-standing direct cooperation with a diverse set of interlocutors, including governmental, non-governmental, and international actors. As a UN Agency, IOM is an active member of the UN Country Teams in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. As global co-lead on Camp Coordination and Camp Management, as a formal partner of WHO, a member of Strategic Advisory Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Global Health Cluster, and more recently, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, IOM is increasingly a key player in responding to public health emergencies globally.

IOM'S FUNDING REQUIREMENT

IOM's regional funding requirement for the South Caucasus:

USD 3,725,000

This amount represents an indicative requirement for IOM's planned interventions for nine months (February-December 2020), broken down by country, to cover emerging needs and to ensure migrants and mobility considerations are included in regional and national preparedness plans in the countries of the South Caucasus, and short-to-mid-term socio-economic recovery efforts can be initiated at a scale corresponding to the high expected degree of need.

Summary of Financing Requirement:

Activity Pillars	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia	Total Requested Amount (USD)
COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS	20,000	100,000	105,000	225,000
TRACKING MOBILITY IMPACTS OF COVID-19	-	75,000	175,000	250,000
RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)	30,000	20,000	150,000	200,000
DISEASE SURVEILLANCE	-	200,000	-	200,000
LOGISTICS, PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT	200,000	300,000	150,000	650,000
POINTS OF ENTRY (PoE)	400,000	200,000	250,000	850,000
PROTECTION	100,000	200,000	350,000	650,000
ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT	250,000	150,000	300,000	700,000
TOTAL PER COUNTRY	1,000,000	1,245,000	1,480,000	3,725,000

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