



WFP Uganda

COVID-19 External Situation Report #1
19 May 2020

Highlights

WFP is part of a national taskforce managing the countrywide response alongside the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF and other UN agencies.

WFP is supporting the Government of Uganda in the COVID-19 response for the urban poor, providing cash transfers for urban refugees and assisting the Ministry of Health in logistics coordination and management.

In Numbers

227 COVID-19 confirmed cases

3.8m people in need of food assistance

Situation Update

- As the first COVID-19 cases were registered in Uganda on 21 March 2020, the government responded rapidly, implementing a series of measures and developing national guidelines to curb the spread of the virus. Countrywide restrictions on public and private movements were imposed along with a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The country also suspended the admission of new refugees, shutting down all border transits and reception centers. A nationwide closure of schools was declared, with huge implications for students' learning and for other key aspects of their lives such as school meals.
- Restrictions are expected to have wide-ranging consequences, including for livelihoods and employment opportunities, leaving millions of people (especially vulnerable groups like refugees, the elderly and female-headed households) in urgent need of assistance.
- Food prices have shown a significant inflation since the outbreak of COVID-19, which will likely lead extremely vulnerable households to adopt negative coping strategies, including selling off assets, increasing early childhood marriage and limiting the food intake.
- Heavy rains throughout the country are disrupting food distributions, as roads became impassable in several areas.

WFP Response

- WFP has adapted its ways of operating to ensure uninterrupted lifesaving assistance to the most

vulnerable populations, ensuring that program implementation does not put beneficiaries at a higher risk of infection. In this context, WFP put in place different mitigation measures at refugee distribution centers, including procedures to reduce site congestion such as physical distancing, double distributions and distribution of prepacked food. WFP also provided handwashing facilities, health and temperature screening at the entrance to sites, and information sharing on containment measures. To protect the health of the people it serves, partners and staff, WFP temporarily suspended the use of iris scans and fingerprints for the biometrics verification of refugees during its food or cash distributions, using instead ration cards and government-issued verification letters to authenticate identities against digital photos from the UNHCR beneficiary information management database.

- Following the government's request to support urban refugees in Kampala, WFP is working to provide a 3-months cash distribution to approximately 80,000 people using mobile money. WFP is part of a task force together with UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister, and is participating in bi-weekly meetings to prepare for the distribution.
- WFP is supporting the district local governments in West Nile to incorporate new categories of vulnerable people in need into a short-term safety-net programme.
- WFP engaged with the Uganda Red Cross Society and the Uganda Virus Research Institute to provide training on dealing with COVID-19 to district local government workers, WFP staff, cooperating partners and volunteers.

- WFP kept the people it serves constantly informed of all the new measures, using sensitization teams and contactless channels such as pre-recorded messages and radio spots.



Food and Nutrition Assistance

- WFP is providing refugees with double ration entitlements and resource transfers to cover both May and June, and is prepacking food, intended to reduce the time refugees spend at food distribution points, decreasing crowding and the associated proximity transmission risk. WFP is also scaling up cash-based assistance in the South-West region.
- WFP is working on solutions to ensure continued food market functionality in its areas of operation, particularly in settlements where food assistance is provided in the form of cash transfers.
- WFP is maintaining acute malnutrition treatment programs in the Karamoja region and in refugee settlements, changing the distribution frequency from bi-weekly to monthly to limit the spread of COVID-19 and expanding the criteria for entry. Likewise, in the refugee response, WFP resumed and adjusted the Maternal Child Health and Nutrition Program (MCHN) aimed at the prevention of stunting among pregnant and lactating women and children aged 6-23 months, distributing 2-months rations of Super Cereal Plus.
- Because of the COVID pandemic, a nationwide closure of schools is in force. Nearly 130,000 children in the Karamoja region are missing out on school meals on which they depend. WFP is considering the possibility of providing take-home rations to ensure that school children continue to receive support that addresses their food and nutritional requirements.



Supply Chain

- WFP is providing storage for medical equipment belonging to the government and WHO, as well as warehousing and trucks for the government's urban food distributions.
- At the request of the government, WFP constructed a temporary COVID-19 screening terminal to help Uganda manage passenger arrivals at the Entebbe International Airport.
- WFP is also mounting a regional passenger air service to ferry humanitarian and health workers across East Africa to overcome disruptions to commercial air services. The flight service, which will link Entebbe to Addis Ababa, will be running on a weekly basis.

Monitoring & Assessments

- To minimize the risk to WFP beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders, WFP's substantial in-person data collection will be reduced to a minimum. A remote monitoring system is in place, collecting data from households located in refugee settlements, refugee-hosting communities, Karamoja and 14 urban centers to understand the food security situation and the ability to meet essential needs. Post-distribution monitoring of general food assistance will also shift to phone-based data collection from May. Most other in-person program monitoring will be suspended, with the exception of distribution monitoring within the refugee response.
- WFP has intensified market monitoring with the aim of improving program implementation and reviewing the amount of cash-based transfers against the market price of the food that refugees receive.
- In order to inform a possible food assistance response to Kampala-based refugees, WFP undertook a rapid food security and essential needs assessment at the end of April, collecting data from 212 refugees registered in Kampala. The assessment indicated that the economic activity among respondents has been severely impacted by the pandemic and the containment measures, with 87 percent of respondents reporting a major impact and some levels of income loss. About half of the sample population lost over 75 percent of household income. The proportion of households without an income earner increased from 31 percent before the crisis to 72 percent at the time of the survey. Households headed by women, persons living with disabilities and elderly people were among the most affected by the crisis.

Funding

- WFP Uganda's COVID-19 response is captured under the "UN Emergency Appeal for the Response to COVID-19 and its Impacts in Uganda" (which includes the previous WHO-led COVID-19 response appeal), officially launched on 23 April. The UN is appealing for US\$ 316 million to support the country in minimizing the impact of the pandemic on its most vulnerable groups of people over the next six months. Under this appeal, WFP will support the Government of Uganda in improving access to food and nutrition as well as social support and projects to rebuild livelihoods for both refugees and host communities.

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