



03 April 2020

Dear Friends:

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) MENA continues to accompany, serve and advocate for the people of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, while responding to the many uncertainties of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Our response continues to be defined by innovation in the face of this pandemic. However, we are also making plans for a return to “normal” activity, even if it may be several weeks or months ahead of us. We have already begun asking for financial help with hygiene kits and basic needs assistance for displaced people who have been affected by this pandemic.

We continue to ask for your help as we respond to the local implications of this pandemic. Thank you to those organizations that have offered flexibility in reporting or which have allowed for the re-allocation of funds for our COVID-19 response.

Below we share information (data from 02 April 2020) on five different areas:

- Regional office
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria.

Thank you for your flexibility and continued support of those we accompany.

Regional office

- Financial transfers to JRS MENA projects will be delayed because the banks in Lebanon are closed. JRS Regional office will not be able to transfer /withdraw any money. We are monitoring the continued closures and are working on to resolve these disruptions on our programmes.
- All staff working remotely.
- All trainings, field visits, or donor visits have been cancelled, or postponed.

Iraq

Country

- 772 confirmed cases with 54 deaths.
- Travel ban continues. NGOs have been exempted from the travel ban but it is still very difficult to operate as enforcement is strict and cautious. All travel prohibited even for NGOs between KRI and Gol.
- Baghdad and Erbil airports remain closed to commercial flights.
- From 19 March lockdown in all governorates.
- All banks remain closed which limits access to funds.

Country office

- Staff working remotely.
- Regular staff meetings continue remotely.

Projects

- In Sharya, education programmes remain suspended as per the KRG Min. Of Education.
- Family visits remain suspended to avoid spread of COVID-19.
- MHPSS in person programmes have been suspended.
- After suspending programmes, precautions were taken for individuals with urgent cases (suicide risk).
- Those individuals that needed to have their psychiatric medicines continue to receive them in a safe manner. MHPSS medicines are being procured despite difficulties in travel.
- In Qaraqosh, as per the Gol Ministry of Education, KG and all educational activities remain suspended.

Jordan

Country

- Confirmed cases: 299 with 5 deaths
- Flights continue to be suspended, and land and sea borders remain closed.
- General lockdown and curfews in effect for the entire country.

Country office

- All reporting, monitoring, and recruitment process (on-line only), will continue.
- All staff continues to work remotely.
- Social media awareness campaign on COVID –19 since 01 March.
- Regular staff meetings (CO and projects) occur remotely.

Projects

- Educational and psychosocial programmes of J02 and J03 remain suspended. This includes the suspension of home visits.
- Experimenting with online and remote learning; course videos will be produced and shared on-line. Our teachers and facilitators are in touch with the students and beneficiaries.
- The Home Visits teams have established a phone line that is open every day from 9 am – 5 pm to receive calls for any emergency cases for referral or medical assistance.

Lebanon

Country

- Confirmed cases: 494 with 16 deaths
- GoL has announced a “Lockdown” restricting movement outside of the house for everyone until April 12.
- Travel ban restricting all non-emergency arrivals by air, land or sea is also in place until April 12.

Country office

- JRS teams continue to meet remotely to organize projects for the foreseeable future.
- JRS Country Office continues to work remotely.
- Regular staff meeting for CO and projects with updates and planning for the future.
- Social media and poster campaigns have been present in JRS Lebanon projects since 10 March. JRS will continue posting on JRS Lebanon Facebook page videos and posters which are produced by MOH and WHO as kind of awareness for the people who follow our page.

Projects

- JRS continues WhatsApp groups for distance learning for children. Lessons are short, approx. 1 minute, followed by an exercise. This seems to be working for despite limited internet access for many families.
- Home visits remain suspended. The Home visit teams are working on reports, accessing training, and following up with families via phone. HV teams have spoken with the Clinical psychologist about how to reply to certain questions.
- Some JRS social workers have attended the COVID-19 training which UNICEF is providing (Trainings of Trainers sessions) to NON-Health LCRP partners.
- Social workers at the social centers maintain contact with beneficiaries by creating WhatsApp group for each group counseling and managed to conduct sessions. They

maintain individual counseling even though it is limited to individuals who have limited internet access.

- All social workers in the social center sent a WhatsApp message (in text and by voice message) to the households about COVID-19 symptoms, and prevention.
- JRS is preparing for hygiene related supplies to be available in our projects (soap, bleach, paper towels, sanitizers...) following the instructions provided by MOH, MEHE and other entities.

Syria

Country

- Confirmed cases: 16 with 2 deaths
- Significant increase reported in cost of basic food materials and PPE.
- Syrian Government has ordered that all schools, and universities remain closed. GoS has ordered the suspension of all activities and gathering held by organizations, churches, mosques, etc.

Country office

- JRS Syria staff are working remotely.
- Regular staff meetings via internet.

Projects

- Following the directive of the Syrian Government on 15 March and after consulting the Project Directors, all activities were suspended in Jeramana, AlKafroun and AlSakhour.
- JRS has re-opened the Health Project in Aleppo after developing a plan for service that provided for the safety of beneficiaries as well as staff. Staff of this project report a great sense of joy at being able to return to the work (safely) that is so necessary in this crisis.