



27 March 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.

All our work has changed, and all in-person programmes have been suspended. However, the JRS staff throughout the region demonstrate their common humanity by innovating in their accompaniment. We have begun remote learning in Lebanon and Jordan. We are continuing MHPSS support groups and individual care through WhatsApp groups and individual phone calls. Our Home visits teams are staffing hotlines for beneficiaries. In our country offices, the communications teams are sharing scientific, data driven protection and prevention information about COVID-19 to counteract the misinformation that is being spread in many places.

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 26 March 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. If the banks remain closed past 29 March, then April activities will be affected.
- All staff working remotely as much as possible.
- All trainings, field visits, or donor visits have been cancelled, or postponed.

Iraq

Country

- 382 confirmed cases with 86 deaths and 105 people have recovered.
- Travel ban continues. NGOs have been exempted from the travel ban.
- Baghdad and Erbil airports remain closed to commercial flights.
- As of 19 March at 00:00hours, the lockdown in the KRI applies across all governorates.
- Central Bank of Kurdistan has been closed since 09 March which limits access to funds.
- JRS work has been made more difficult by serious flooding that occurred in Northern Iraq (Duhok, Sharya, Qaraqosh) on 18 March.

Country office

- Staff working remotely.

Projects

- In Sharya, education programmes remain suspended as per the KRG Min. Of Education.
- 01 March JRS suspended family visits to avoid spread of COVID-19.
- MHPSS 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. We have medical supplies to last until the second week of April.
- In Qaraqosh, as per the GoI Ministry of Education, KG and all educational activities remain suspended.
- In JRS projects, project directors, coordinators, and drivers, cleaners, and guards have been careful to disinfect centres, as well as of vehicles.

Jordan

Country

- Confirmed cases: 172. Zero deaths
- Flights continue to be suspended, and land and sea borders remain closed.
- General lockdown and curfew 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.

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.
- ASU will continue with their platform, only 13% chose not to continue. Some individual sessions and group sessions continued via Skype as much as the beneficiaries had internet access. J02 teachers are working to prepare videos to share with the students.
- 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: 368 with 6 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.
- 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.
- JRS continues to follow MEHE and MOH instructions related to COVID-19.

Projects

- JRS has begun a pilot project by creating a WhatsApp group to prepare for distance learning for children. Lessons will be short, approx. 1 minute, followed by an exercise. This will be assessed for efficacy, taking into consideration the limited access to streaming internet of most 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 WhatsApp and Wi-Fi or 3G.
- 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: 5 with 0 deaths
- Syrian Government has ordered that all schools, and universities remain closed until 05 April. GoS has ordered the suspension of all activities and gathering held by organizations, churches, mosques, etc.

Country office

- JRS Syria staff are working remotely.

Projects

- Following the directive of the Syrian Government on 15 March and after consulting the Project Directors, all activities were suspended in Jeramana, AlKafrun and AlSakhour.
- JRS decided with the team of the Health Project in Aleppo to suspend the health services in the clinics in the interest of the staff and beneficiaries. We will continue to monitor this situation and determine when we can safely re-open.