



16 April 2020

Dear Friends:

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) MENA continues monitor the ongoing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on our programmes. Most of our education and psycho-social support programmes are now happening remotely. We are grateful to our staff who have demonstrated rapid ingenuity and deep concern for those we accompany. They are a clear example of the beauty of our shared humanity.

A realistic read of the trajectory of this pandemic forces us to acknowledge the distinct possibility that in-person programmes may not begin for many weeks or months. We rely on the guidance of WHO and local public health officials to determine the “return” date, and nothing is clear now. With this possibility, we have begun deliberate planning.

Our planning now focuses on safe distribution of hygiene kits and food baskets for the people we serve. In addition, we are making assuring that preparations will be ready for the schools and centres to receive staff and beneficiaries in a healthy and safe way when we do return.

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. This pandemic will continue to require flexibility and ingenuity from us all.

Below we share information (data from 15 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

- 1415 confirmed cases with 79 deaths.
- KRG has declared a government holiday until 02 May.
- 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

- (IRQ05) Lead psychologist & project director Firas Sulaiman on call for urgent psychiatric cases during the entire period.
- (IRQ05) Purchased and distributed psychiatric medication for 248 cases.
- (IRQ05) Provided transportation for all MHPSS cases in JRS vehicles while applying social distancing rules.
- Individual medical follow-up consultations and distribution of psychiatric medication for all cases in Qaraqosh.
- Shared COVID-19 prevention information to project beneficiaries with access to smartphones.
- Shared links to online education resources for teenage IDP children who have smartphones.
- Provided remote child protection training for child protection focal points.
- (IRQ10) Shared links to online education resources for teenage IDP children who have smartphones.

## Jordan

### Country

- Confirmed cases: 401 with 7 deaths
- GoJ has closed all borders until the end of Ramadan (approx. 23 May 2020).
- General lockdown and curfews in effect for the entire country.
- GoJ coordinating the humanitarian cash assistance and in-kind distributions.
- No permissions of movement for the NGOs outside camps.

### 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

- A task force of three members from the projects is being formed to ensure that JRS response meets the needs of the people, also to train the staff and prepare for the next stage after reopening.
- Educational and psychosocial programmes of J02 and J03 remain suspended. This includes the suspension of home visits.
- J03 PPSE program are utilizing Google classrooms for all levels and for Case Management course: 60% of the materials are going well, still working on the 40%.
- J02 teachers are available for the students through hotlines and utilizing virtual WhatsApp classrooms; responsiveness level is 60% for the ages 9 -12 years and 40% for 13- 16 years. We have shared the links for the online learning channels produced by the MoE.
- Teachers have been trained in Online teaching.
- MHPSS team are preparing a survey to assess the situation of the families and prepare for the response.
- MHPSS hotline is open for those who need psychosocial support.
- The challenges are the poor internet connections of the students or lack of regular availability. With initial remote programs we are not able to track the full participation of the students. With the new platforms of Google classrooms and virtual WhatsApp this can be possible. The approximate percentages of participation will be shared in the monthly reports.
- 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. The home visits team with support from country office are working on the new concept note for the COVID fund.

- Coordinators and project directors are attending the sector working groups
- Staff care meetings online; spaces to enjoy time together to break isolation.

## Lebanon

### Country

- Confirmed cases: 658 with 21 deaths (as of 15 April 2020)
- GoL has announced a “Lockdown” restricting movement outside of the house for everyone until April 26.
- Travel ban restricting all non-emergency arrivals by air, land or sea is also in place until April 26.

### 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.
- Decreased participation of students in remote learning in Baalbek. Team is investigating. Initial feedback is that access to phones is limited or not shared with children. We will continue to problem solve.
- Home visits team phone contact families daily.
- Medicine for urgent cases is still provided in a safe way.
- 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.
- Social workers have begun sending weekly family conversation topics on how to deal with certain cases/behaviors at home (anger, depression, fear, etc.)

- Psychosocial support groups are being conducted every week via WhatsApp; each group session lasts 2 hours.
- Families of the social center (LBN03) were sent awareness videos about COVID19 and precautions they need to take, and Social worker is interacting daily with the women and to addressing any questions related to COVID 19
- Celebrated Mother's day via WhatsApp
- Social Center English classes for adult men level 1 and 2 and Arabic for women level 1, 2, & 3 have been very interactive on the WhatsApp groups for these classes and reviewing the material with the students via and will be moving forward with the curriculum via WhatsApp as well

## Syria

### Country

- Confirmed cases: 33 with 2 deaths (as of 15 April 2020)
- Continued increases 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. The most recent update from GoS is that the suspensions will remain in place until 03 May.

### Country office

- JRS Syria staff are working remotely.
- Regular staff meetings via internet.
- Finance, M&E and IS teams are especially busy with grants, proposals, reports, and questions from donors.

### Projects

- All activities remain 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.
- All programme teams have now established a COVID19 Task force to prepare for the next steps in their particular circumstances.
- Teams in all projects have established a system of phone check ins with families.

- Al Kafroun project is exploring possibilities of remote educational support for children via Facebook.
- Education team is developing an Education Manual for children for at- home learning. Details of distribution are still being assessed.