

Key Messages

FAST-TRACK HEALTH AND AID WORKERS AND SUPPLIES AT BORDERS AND IN COUNTRIES

UNICEF and OCHA
in consultation with the IASC members

May 2020

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Fast-track health and aid workers and supplies at borders and in countries

Following discussions at IASC Principals meeting on 9 April 2020, UNICEF and OCHA have produced some communication content to support our collective advocacy efforts for safe and fast-tracked access for health and aid workers and supplies at borders and in countries.

The graphics are available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wh3tkf12z7wccmd/AAAfHQTW9T-HrRF5Zs2ZAC0ga?dl=0>

Below is some messaging to provide context that can go with the suggested graphics along with some social media messages.

Fast-track health and aid workers and supplies at borders and in countries

- COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of people across the world. People affected by conflict and other disasters live in areas where health, water and sanitation, and other essential services are often already extremely fragile or unavailable.
- People affected by conflict and other disasters, including many internally displaced persons and refugees, children, older people, and people with disabilities, are extremely vulnerable and often rely on existing humanitarian operations to survive. The COVID-19 pandemic presents yet another challenge for the world's most vulnerable people that requires a collective response.
- In their efforts to prevent the spread of the pandemic, many governments have taken measures limiting internal and cross-border movements. We support measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic, and all humanitarian organisations are committed to respect such decisions taken by governments. Simultaneously, some measures may unintentionally impede humanitarian operations at a time when they're needed most, in particular by restricting the movement of most-needed medical personnel and supplies vital to stemming COVID-19 and saving lives.
- COVID-19 related measures add to and could worsen pre-existing access constraints due to insecurity, armed conflict, community tensions, bureaucratic impediments, sanctions or counterterrorism measures.
- To scale up the response to COVID-19 and to continue critical lifesaving humanitarian support, health and humanitarian supplies and workers should be considered as essential and be allowed to safely and rapidly move across borders and within countries, while adhering to ethical international recruitment standards, as well as infection prevention and control measures to protect themselves and others. Protective measures must be enhanced to prevent attacks on health and humanitarian workers, supply convoys and facilities, while respecting humanitarian principles.
- With safe, rapid and unimpeded access of health and humanitarian aid workers, we will be able to scale up and better support governments by providing vital health supplies and equipment to bolster the COVID-19 response and sustain access to lifesaving services. We can ensure more women have sustained access to life-saving maternal and reproductive health care, including safe delivery services. We can ensure more children don't miss out on lifesaving routine immunizations or treatment for malnutrition and continued access to learning. We can continue to provide critical food supplies, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter protection, education and livelihoods support for the most vulnerable people across the world.
- We call on humanitarian organisations and all relevant authorities to work together to address the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable and ensure the continuity of humanitarian operations, including by facilitating the safe, timely and unimpeded passage of humanitarian cargo and personnel into and within countries. We also call, where relevant, on humanitarian exemptions to ensure that sanctions do not hamper impartial humanitarian activities, or the provision of essential goods or services needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In that regard, we commend measures already taken by some governments to fast-track customs procedures or facilitate the movement of humanitarian staff in country. We need to make sure that these measures are promptly implemented; that progress also happens in other areas, such as movements of staff across borders; and that more governments implement similar measures.
- In addition, we recommend governments to facilitate humanitarian flight operations, including all aspects related to entry, departure and transit of aircrafts, humanitarian passengers, cargo and spare parts, such as custom clearance, landing permits and dedicated aerodrome services and terminals. We also call on all governments and respective authorities to expedite matters related to the custom clearance procedures for medical equipment, to facilitate matters relating to expiration of personnel licenses and to facilitate the movement restrictions for humanitarian personnel in country in compliance with the existing public health procedures.

Some suggested social media copy:

To fight #COVID19, many governments have limited movement. We support measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic, but it must not hold back humanitarian operations, including life-saving COVID-19 support.

As we scale up the response against #COVID19, governments must help fast-track life-saving supplies and essential humanitarian and health workers into and within countries.

As we respond to #COVID19, we're also providing food, shelter and other life-saving support to vulnerable families. To continue this critical work, we need access.

To scale up lifesaving humanitarian supplies and services for children and families during the #COVID19 pandemic, health & humanitarian workers urgently need access.

#HealthWorkers are #NotATarget. They must be protected to provide #COVID19 and essential humanitarian services safely to those in greatest need.

With better access, humanitarians can scale up and better support governments by providing vital health expertise, supplies and equipment to bolster the immediate #COVID19 response.

Food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, education, protection & livelihoods support for the most vulnerable affected by #COVID19 needs to be prioritized. To continue this critical work, we need access.

We call on humanitarian organisations & authorities to tackle the impact of #COVID19 on the most vulnerable together & ensure humanitarian operation, by fast-tracking humanitarian cargo & personnel into & within countries.