COVID-19 Response
2020 Update

Malteser International Americas

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OVERVIEW

As the world came to a standstill in 2020 to curb the transmission of COVID-19, international humanitarian organizations were faced with the difficult task of adapting their life-saving activities while expanding their work to address the imminent threat of COVID-19 head-on. Our staff at Headquarters in Cologne and New York quickly transitioned to home office and our field staff continued providing life saving services to millions of the most vulnerable while also adapting and scaling up programming to address COVID-19 in their regions. All staff received training on COVID-19 safety protocols, modes of transmission, and symptoms.

For thousands of families around the world, Malteser International is the first line of primary health care and an important source of public health knowledge. Our work is rooted in the 900-year-old tradition of the Order of Malta, and it stands on its Catholic values and humanitarian principles.

Responding to global pandemics has been a constant aspect of Malteser International's history - from the Ebola crisis to cholera - each outbreak has taught us valuable lessons. COVID-19 has been no different. Many countries in the developing world are still vulnerable and suffering great losses.

We have seen firsthand how the COVID-19 pandemic has had detrimental direct and secondary consequences on the lives of the most vulnerable populations, including the lives of refugees, migrants, and their host communities. The pandemic has unmasked the chronic and systemic inequalities embedded into healthcare systems the world over. It has also taught us how dangerous inequalities - between countries as well as within countries - can be for our collective health.

During this time, many of our core strategies have proven effective. Among these are our commitment to long-term development projects, our focus on emergency preparedness, and partnerships with local authorities and businesses have been rewarding.

“Strengthening the capacity of communities to deal with emergencies is key. But this is accomplished incrementally and over time. There are no short-cuts with this type of work” says Ravi Tripptrap, Executive Director of Malteser International Americas.

One of the great challenges has been adapting to each country’s COVID-19 response, which have varied in approach and intensity. In some places, restrictions on travel and economic activities have not only affected the people we serve but also the ways in which we deliver our services.

According to the World Bank, after decades of steady progress in reducing the number of people living on less than $1.90/day, COVID-19 will usher in the first reversal in the fight against extreme poverty in a generation. The latest analysis warns that COVID-19 has pushed an additional 88
million people into extreme poverty - and that figure is just a baseline.

In 2020, Malteser International provided desperately needed COVID-19 services to over 2.7 million people. More specifically we:

➢ Renovated and installed 39,583 WASH facilities (water supply and handwashing stations)

➢ 680,165 people received hygiene material for COVID-19 prevention (e.g. soap, disinfectants, masks, PPEs, etc.)

➢ 206,733 persons received food or nutrition assistance

➢ 55,896 persons received cash and/or voucher assistance

➢ 2,771,228 persons were reached by information campaigns / education measures on the modes of transmission of COVID 19.

Country Responses

Americas

Colombia

Activities: Construction of 38 community handwashing stations and 2,100 household handwashing stations; 4,753 people received hygiene material (soap, disinfectants, masks, PPE, etc) for COVID-19 prevention; 36,485 received Primary Health Care consultation; 9,988 people received food and nutrition assistance; and 7,424 individuals were reached by informational campaigns and education on the modes of transmissions of COVID-19; increased medical mobile teams in the border region; support to PAHO, UNHCR and Health Secretariat for crisis management. Our interventions are focused mostly on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Haiti

Activities: Construction of 11 water kiosks, 35 large and 135 small handwashing stations and 30 wells for access to clean water; Distribution of 3,900 COVID-19 hygiene kits and 500 standard hygiene kits; Training of partner staff and volunteers for sensitization; 13,775 people received food / nutrition assistance; and 42,519 people were reached by information campaigns and education on the modes of transmission of COVID-19. We are reaching out to the elderly population with particular care and attention.

USA

Activities: Distribution of hand sanitizers, face masks, food supplies and non-perishable items to parishes and food banks in Florida, New Jersey, and New York. In New York City, delivery of food and water to
New York Common Pantry and the St. Francis of Assisi Breadline. Free flu vaccines in several New York Catholic community centers focusing on the most vulnerable populations.

In 2021, we will be partnering with several organizations to provide COVID-19 vaccinations in the Tri-State area with the possibility of expanding to other regions in need.

**Mexico**

**Activities:** Sensitization, hygiene supplies and support for the elderly; training of existing health brigades on sharing messages related to Covid-19 with the communities.

**Peru**

**Activities:** Sensitization, hygiene supplies and support for the elderly; training of existing health brigades on sharing messages related to Covid-19 with the communities.

**Venezuela**

**Activities:** In partnership with local organizations, 2,896 of the most vulnerable received information and education measures on the modes of transmission of COVID-19; 2,917 individuals received hygiene materials (soap, disinfectants, masks, PPE, etc) for COVID-19 prevention; Support for COVID-19 preparedness and response - quarantine and/or isolation

wards, improved WASH and/or with equipment/ protective materials, additional staff and training) to 3 health facilities where 21,896 individuals received PHC consultations and 3 WASH handwashing facilities were renovated.

**Middle East**

Malteser International’s work in the Middle East is mainly focused on providing aid to those displaced from the long-term political instability and violence as well as supporting overburdened local medical and social structures in their host countries. We are implementing COVID-19 activities in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

Within these countries, 22,517 water supply and handwashing stations were renovated or installed; 152,287 people received hygiene material for COVID-19 prevention which included soap, disinfectants, masks and PPE material; 29 health facilities were supported for COVID-19 preparedness and response; 383,967 individuals were provided Primary Health Care consultations and 285,338 were consulted in out-patient departments within the hospitals; 1,098 of the most vulnerable received cash or voucher assistance; and 480,188 people were reached through information and education campaigns on the modes of COVID-19 transmission.
Asia is the world’s most disaster-prone region and the largest of Malteser International’s regional responses. We are working in the following 10 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand.

Over 1 million individuals have been reached by information campaigns and received education on the modes of transmission of COVID-19 through radio, school outreach, community level house to house campaigns and within refugee campaigns; 40,691 (including 6,952 of the most vulnerable families) received cash and/or voucher assistance through mobile banking or other means for those that have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic; 3,258 WASH facilities such as hand pumps, water tanks, and handwashing stations have been renovated or installed; 208,564 individuals received hygiene material for COVID-19 prevention; 346 health facilities were supported with preparedness and response capabilities (quarantine and isolation wards, improved WASH and with equipment/protective materials, and with additional staff and training); 218,952 individuals were consulted in these medical facilities/clinics by a medical professional; the job training for health staff; and 65,206 of the most vulnerable (pregnant & lactating women, severely malnourished children and the elderly) received food and nutrition assistance.

Africa
Living conditions for most of the continent’s inhabitants remain poor, and Malteser International’s work in Africa focuses on strengthening local healthcare systems and improving food security and water supplies to help protect public health. We work in local communities and in some of the largest refugee camps.

Our ongoing humanitarian programs are focused in 7 countries - Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Uganda. Additionally, the Cameroon Government requested assistance from our Emergency Medical Team (EMT) after the country experienced a rapid rise in cases. Our interventions ensured that healthcare workers treating patients did not become infected themselves and that medical facilities remained free of the virus.

Within the region, 11,456 community / household handwashing stations and water systems were renovated or installed; 286,195 people received hygiene material for COVID-19 prevention including PPE, soap, and hygiene kits; we supported 113 hospitals/medical clinics with their preparedness and response to the pandemic; over 1.3 million people were
provided a primary health consultation at these medical facilities; 117,764 of the most vulnerable received food and nutrition assistance; 14,107 people that lost their livelihood as a result of COVID-19 received cash or voucher assistance; and 1.18 million people were reached through radio spots, social media messages, songs and leaflets with information about the modes of COVID-19 transmission and behavioural change communication on hygiene and sanitation. You can listen to the song and view the video [here](#).

**Europe**

Malteser International’s work in [Eastern Ukraine](#), focused in areas where internal conflict has had a significant impact on the mental health of the population. Our psychosocial support services were adapted to the lockdown measures - we opened several telephone helplines to ensure service access and continuity for people with mental health conditions, moved individual and group therapy sessions online and developed resources for citizens and health professional to help them better cope with psychological stress caused by the pandemic. In total, we supported 24 health facilities to provide 19,183 individuals individual therapy and 12,391 people with-in a group setting. Additionally, 21,049 of the most vulnerable received hygiene materials for COVID-19 prevention and educational information on the modes of COVID-19 transmission.

The world is only as strong as the weakest health system!

### 2021 Programming

Now that vaccinations against COVID-19 are underway worldwide, Malteser International has called for governments and institutions to ensure vulnerable people in the Global South have swift and equitable access to safe COVID-19 vaccines, and that no one is left behind. However, it is projected that in poorer economies, widespread vaccination coverage will not be achieved before 2023, if at all.

To ensure continued assistance for people in need worldwide, we will continue to focus on sustaining lifesaving humanitarian operations, supporting the global COVID-19 response and mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable populations.

If you are interested in supporting our ongoing COVID-19 response and prevention programming in the Americas or any other country, please contact Ellen Powers at ellen.powers@malteser-international.org.