

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY OF MEDICINES, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, WASH AND LOGISTICAL ITEMS

1. Background

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an unprecedented demand for medical items and medicines to respond to the outbreak. The regular international medical supply chain and manufacturing of products have experienced major disruption, with a global shortage of items including personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical products, and significant delays in delivery. This situation will most likely affect regular non COVID related medical orders. Disruption of air travel and airfreight is limiting the ability to rapidly supply essential items where they are needed. This volatile environment is coupled with a lack of country and global coordination, which WHO is addressing through the establishment of an Emergency UN supply Chain Cell (UNSCC) in Geneva. PHS and SMS are attending these meetings.

Whilst refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR, may be included in national COVID-19 response plans, national supply capacity is likely to require reinforcement in most country operations and procurement by UNHCR is likely required to respond to operations with significant health programmes.

2. UNHCR Supply List for COVID 19 Preparedness and Response

UNHCR has developed a list of items required to support COVID 19 response in refugee settings (annex 1: UNHCR COVID 19 Supplies List) and quantities required for a population of 10,000 persons. The list is based on WHO guidance and includes WASH items and other logistic requirements for setting up isolation and treatment areas. Some items are not included in UNHCR's Essential Medicines List (EML), however they are available on the WHO EML and UNHCR has taken measures to be able to procure these items through frame agreement holders, UNICEF and the UNSCC mechanism. Local procurement of these items may also be considered subject to the regular approval processes by PHS and SMS.

3. Preparedness for COVID 19 in UNHCR Operations

All operations should assess their readiness to respond to a COVID outbreak and identify gaps to be addressed. Please assess the following:

- I. Status of regular medical orders, supply pipeline, existing stock levels
- II. Current stock levels of items on the COVID supply list to identify immediate capacity to respond and address gaps

4. Stockpiling for UNHCR Operations

UNHCR recommends rational stockpiling. There are three levels of stockpiling recommended:

- I. **Centrally.** Acquisition of dedicated stocks to be held and managed by UNHCRs current global frame agreement suppliers (Europe and Asia). Stocks will be procured by UNHCR and managed by the FA suppliers in their warehouse ready for rapid deployment as required. Taking into consideration the shelf-life requirements of certain items and possible limitations on air cargo availability, regional and country level stockpiling are also recommended.
- II. **Regionally.** UNHCR does not have regional warehousing capacity for medicines. For this reason, we are examining potential arrangements with UN sisters or other agencies that have the regional warehousing expertise and capacity for storage of UNHCR stocks.
- III. **Country level.** Subject to risk assessment and government response capacity, some operations will be required to procure and maintain a stockpile at either the UNHCR or the partner warehouses.

5. Requests from Governments for procurement and country level coordination

UNHCR may receive requests from governments to procure items to support them to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. These requests should be shared at country level with WHO and the UNCT to ensure proper coordination, adequate consolidation, and to avoid duplication in the acquisition process. UNHCR may conduct the procurement process provided it has been coordinated through the above mechanism. All such requests should be shared with Regional Bureau Senior Public Health Officer and PHS at HQ.

The UNSCC maintains an oversight of country level orders placed by different UN agencies for effective supply coordination – especially of PPE and other items that will expect shortage. The cell's staffing capacity is being reinforced and since last week a tool for tracking country level requests by UN partners is live. UNHCR HQ has access to the tool and can enter any government requests received by UNHCR. The cell holds a weekly call with the key actors, including UNHCR.

6. Procurement Procedures to follow

UNHCR [policies on Essential Medicines and Medical Supplies](#) favour international procurement. However, due to the limitations in ensuring a viable supply chain as a result of the COVID_19, local procurement will be allowed in some countries to ensure availability and enable timely delivery.

International Procurement

UNHCR has Frame Agreements with international suppliers and may also procure through other UN agencies, notably UNICEF and WHO.

- Country orders should be prepared and approved by Regional Bureau Senior Public Health Officer and PHS at HQ, and placed by Procurement through FA holders as per usual procedures

Local Procurement

- Some country operations rely on Frame Agreements with local suppliers (process duly vetted by PHS at HQ). In this case, ordering can proceed as per usual procedure
- For countries where there is no arrangement for local procurement, seek guidance from PHS at HQ

Key quality measures for local procurement

- Medical products locally procured must be registered by the National Drug Authorities
- Local suppliers must be licensed by the Government
- In the countries where UNHCR's partner QUAMED has conducted a local market assessment, medical suppliers that have been pre-qualified through the process must be considered as first choice to supply medical products to UNHCR Operations. PHS must clear any other options
- Collaboration with other health agencies (e.g. WHO, UNICEF, UNDP) and INGOs is recommended in order to identify local suppliers qualified to provide medical products to UNHCR operations

Final approval by HQ PHS and SMS will still be required for all local procurement.

7. Key Contacts

Regional Bureaux: Senior Regional PH Officers & Senior Regional Supply Officers

Headquarters:

DRS, Public Health Section: Javier Utande (utande@unhcr.org), Mike Woodman (woodmanm@unhcr.org)

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8. Key references

- i. [WHO Novel Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Disease Commodity Package](#), WHO March 2020
- ii. [Clinical management of severe acute respiratory infection when novel coronavirus \(nCoV\) infection is suspected](#) (interim guidance), WHO March 2020
- iii. [UNICEF Health Emergency Supply Note on Coronavirus](#)