



Standard Chartered Bank

Twelve month Covid-19 report

May 2020 – May 2021

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Introduction

Over one year since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the crisis is far from over. New waves of the virus are spreading across Asia and Africa, and restrictions to help curb the spread are placing further strain and pressure on people's mental health and livelihoods.

The pandemic has also amplified inequalities around the world and people are falling into extremely vulnerable situations as a result. Many are struggling to access medical care, food and water, as well as vital items, such as masks and hand sanitiser, to protect themselves against the virus.

In this context, Standard Chartered Bank's support of 11 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (National Societies) has been invaluable. From providing cash support

to enable families to put food on the table, to addressing misinformation about the virus, National Societies have been working alongside affected communities to ensure their essential needs are met.

Standard Chartered Bank has helped support the health and wellbeing of vulnerable communities during this unprecedented year, building resilience to withstand the physical, social and emotional impacts of the pandemic.

Responding to changing needs

With Standard Chartered Bank's support, National Societies have been able to respond to communities' changing needs during the peaks and troughs of Covid-19 cases. While each country's situation is different, there are some similar priorities to meeting the needs in each community:



Health interventions

Health interventions remain a critical part of the Covid-19 response. This includes surveillance, testing, contact tracing, isolation and prevention measures. These efforts now also include supporting the vaccination rollout. Trusted volunteers are working closely with communities to tackle misinformation, supporting the delivery of the vaccine and ensuring that vulnerable and hard to reach groups are not left behind.



Risk communication and community engagement

Misconceptions about the virus and potential cures continue to circulate among communities, from thinking it only affects certain populations to considering the use of herbs and other traditional remedies in lieu of the vaccine. Community trust is essential to address this misinformation and is something that each of the 11 National Societies has been working on since the start of the pandemic. Thanks to our volunteers being from the very communities they work with, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is often seen as a trusted voice to answer questions and concerns, helping people to make informed decisions about keeping safe and receiving vaccinations.



Photo: © KRCS

A Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) volunteer teaching good handwashing techniques to help reduce the spread of Covid-19.



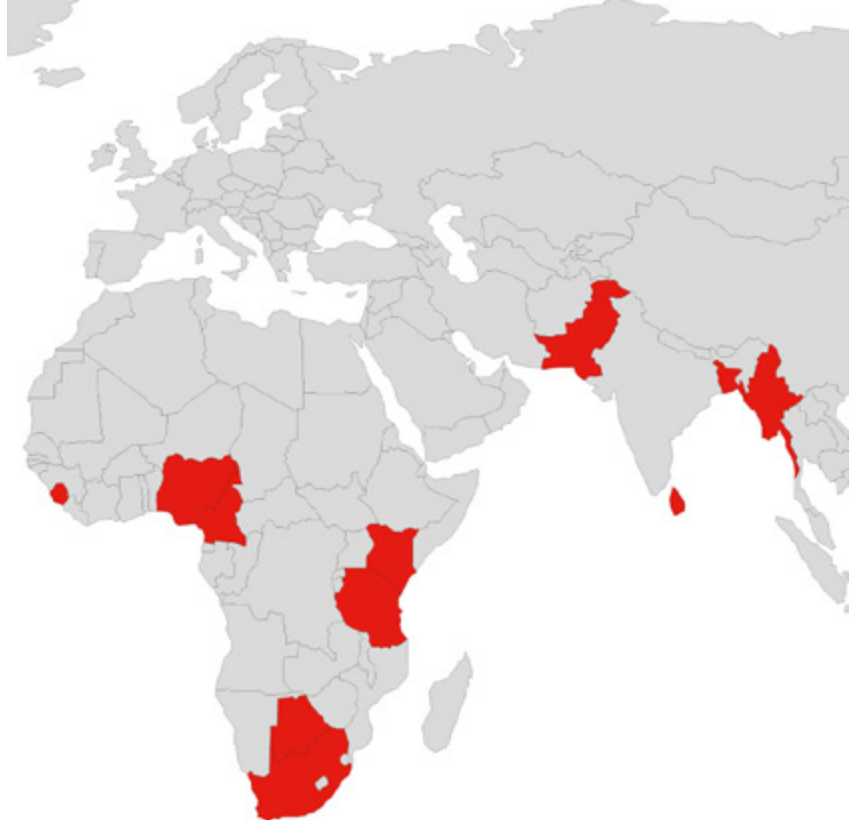
Supporting people's livelihoods

The socio-economic impacts of the virus continue to grow, with the most marginalised groups' livelihoods most affected. Standard Chartered Bank's support has been a vital lifeline in equipping families with tools to build their resilience, from a newly developed cash assistance offer in Sierra Leone to distributing food packages in Pakistan. This has provided impactful and speedy interventions at critical moments, but the need continues to grow and sustained support of people's livelihoods remains a priority across many countries.

Fast facts

Standard Chartered Bank has supported 11 National Societies to provide a holistic package of support to vulnerable communities.

This funding has contributed toward the following achievements over the past year:



67,754



people have been tested by National Societies for Covid-19

175,962,656



opportunities for people to access guidance on how to protect themselves and their communities

1,545



health facilities have been supported

601,653



people have been reached with emotional support

4,037,321



people made vulnerable by Covid-19 have received food and other in-kind assistance

304,469



people made vulnerable by Covid-19 have been reached with cash and voucher assistance

99,784



community feedback comments have been collected

Bangladesh



921,559* confirmed cases



34 million opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices



1.8 million people made vulnerable by Covid-19 reached with cash support, food and other in-kind assistance

Cases in Bangladesh have been rising rapidly since the second wave began in March 2021, with the Delta variant now the dominant strain in the country. Lockdowns have been enforced by the Government of Bangladesh to try and bring the virus back under control, and the vaccination programme – placed on hold in April due to a shortage of vaccines – has since resumed. This will build people's resilience to the virus, easing the pressure on healthcare services.

Raising awareness among communities

With cases rising, community engagement remains an essential part of the Covid-19 response to ensure that people understand how the virus is spread, how to keep safe, and what to do if they think they have the virus. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has reached over **34 million people** with health and hygiene messaging, from door-to-door, community dialogues and handwashing demonstrations, to Facebook live discussions and community radio shows.

The BDRCS has also been providing guidance on how people can look after their mental as well as physical wellbeing. For example, it delivered a digital awareness raising session looking at managing negative coping strategies

in May 2021, which was attended by community leaders, schoolchildren, BDRCS staff and BDRCS youth volunteers. Midwives and BDRCS youth volunteers have also been trained with basic psychosocial first aid training, helping them to continue supporting others while also looking after their own wellbeing and resilience.

Providing vaccine support

BDRCS has been supporting the vaccination programme in Bangladesh since it began in February 2021, with over **700 youth volunteers** trained to support the vaccination drive. As of the 31 May 2021, BDRCS volunteers had assisted with the vaccination of more than **5.1 million people**, 57% of the nationwide total.

To address vaccine hesitancy and inspire people to adhere to public health measures, a further **2,400 volunteers** were mobilised to deliver an awareness-raising campaign, equipping people with accurate information to enable them to make informed decisions about taking the vaccine.

Delivering the essentials

With Covid-19 impacting people's livelihoods as well as their health and wellbeing, BDRCS has continued to provide food and cash support to vulnerable families to ensure that they are able to meet their basic needs. In total, BDRCS has reached over **1.6 million people** with food or other in-kind assistance, and an additional **176,910 people** received cash support.



© IFRC/British Red Cross

BDRCS volunteers working alongside the government of Bangladesh in rolling-out the Covid-19 vaccines nationwide.

*Confirmed cases in the 'fast facts' box at the start of each country update are accurate as of 2 July 2021, unless otherwise stated. Source: World Health Organisation

Myanmar



481,230 confirmed cases*



3.4 million people reached through Covid-19 response activities



7,628 active volunteers

Before the pandemic, communities across Myanmar were impacted by armed conflict and extreme weather such as heatwaves and earthquakes. Covid-19 has made life even harder.

The political unrest, which began this February, has deepened the crisis many families are facing. Over one million people have lost their job, thousands have fled their homes and are struggling to afford the rising cost of food. On top of this, an increasingly stretched healthcare system has struggled to contain and treat the virus, making it more likely to spread unchecked between people and communities.

With Standard Chartered Bank's support, the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has continued to provide essential support to those most in need.

MRCS's response to Covid-19

With your help, MRCS staff and volunteers have:

- Tested **42,500 people** for Covid-19
- Reached **260,597 people** with essential community health services
- Supported **127,188 people** with mental health and wellbeing guidance
- Reached **43,500 people** with sanitation and hygiene activities, such as providing hand-washing basins
- Provided **8,854 people** made more vulnerable by Covid-19 (e.g. displaced, migrant, host families) with cash or in-kind assistance to help them meet their basic needs.

Curbing the spread of the virus

MRCS volunteers have provided vital support to Myanmar's struggling healthcare system. This has included transporting over **22,000 patients** to hospitals and medical centres; disinfecting buildings and equipment; helping care for patients; and providing food to those in need. Their help has ensured that people with Covid-19 can safely isolate, reducing the risk of passing the virus on.

As well as supporting the hospitals, the Red Cross has been working in communities and refugee camps to keep people safe. The MRCS ran a series of campaigns to share guidance on how to stay safe and handwashing techniques. Teams have also been busy distributing face masks and hand sanitisers and installing **870 handwashing units** in schools around the country.



Photo: © Myanmar Red Cross

Myanmar Red Cross volunteers are helping students and teachers practice safety measures to protect themselves from Covid-19.

*This figure is accurate as of 13 October 2021. Source: World Health Organisation



Saung Saung's story

22-year-old Saung Saung arrives first thing in the morning to volunteer at the Sittwe Hospital. Together with hundreds of other Myanmar Red Cross Society volunteers in Rakhine who have been working non-stop, Saung helps to transport oxygen cylinders needed by Covid-19 patients to and from Sittwe General Hospital's oxygen supply depot.

"Sometimes we just don't have enough oxygen to give to everyone. This can be very stressful, both physically and mentally," says Saung.

Oxygen is in high demand across Myanmar and supplies are extremely limited. People queue before dawn at oxygen depots while designated Covid-19 hospitals and medical centres are at full capacity, turning away all but the most severe cases.

Most people with sick family members are scrambling to get oxygen from private

suppliers, often at vastly inflated prices, and most pharmacies have run out of both pulse oximeters and oxygen concentrators due to a nation-wide shortage.

Branches of the Myanmar Red Cross are working with local partners including other charities to secure or rent oxygen cylinders for patients in urgent need. Saung and the other volunteers spend a lot of time on the phone, trying to connect patients directly with local oxygen suppliers.

"If their blood-oxygen level is 50 or below, we try to get them oxygen as quickly as possible. Sometimes patients will call when they are not critical, simply because they are worried that they are not able to get oxygen when they really need it," said Saung.

Pakistan



957,371 confirmed cases



30,419 doses of Covid-19 vaccine administered by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society



33 million people reached through the Covid-19 response

In Pakistan, a new wave of Covid-19 cases starting in March 2021 has seen cases surge and the healthcare system become overwhelmed. Restrictions on movement have been imposed by the Government to try and limit the spread, but while saving lives, this has had a knock-on effect on people's livelihoods and wellbeing. In this ever-changing context, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has continued its efforts across the country to reach the last mile, ensuring support for the most affected communities.

Providing vaccine support

In March 2021, PRCS's Corona Care Hospital was converted from an isolation treatment centre into a government-designated mass vaccination centre. As of 12 May, **30,419 doses** had been administered. To increase accessibility of the centre, PRCS collaborated with the ride-hailing company Uber to provide free rides to the elderly, taking them from their homes to the vaccination centres.

Raising awareness among communities

PRCS launched a free, nation-wide hotline for the public to access Covid-19 information and reduce misconceptions and stigma around the virus. As of 12 May 2021, a total of **109,133 calls** were received through the hotline number, including 62,822 calls relating to Covid-19 queries such as requests for medical support.

Misinformation peaked during the first wave and had been gradually decreasing over time. However, after the launch of the national



Photo: © Pakistan Red Crescent

PRCS volunteers have been reaching out to thousands of people with important hygiene information and awareness raising activities.

vaccination campaign in March, myths and misconceptions about vaccines began to spread again. The hotline is an important tool in bridging this information gap and equipping people with the facts to make their own decisions about the vaccine. PRCS is also introducing a mobile vaccination service and door-to-door vaccination campaigns, which will be used to continue to address communities' concerns and advocate for vaccine take-up.

Providing cash support

Livelihoods and food security remain pressing issues caused by the virus in Pakistan. Movement restrictions and nation-wide lockdowns during the first wave disrupted the country's already struggling economy, and the continuous restrictions imposed since then has further driven down living standards for the majority of the population.

To meet these growing needs, PRCS has distributed cash grants, food and other in-kind assistance to the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. **10,242 households** received unconditional cash and voucher assistance to support their living costs for a month, including **over 71,000 people** who had lost their jobs during the lockdown. **857,752 individuals** also received food and in-kind assistance, from food parcels to family hygiene kits, ensuring that families could meet their basic needs during this challenging time.

Dr Adeel Nawaz's story

Dr Adeel Nawaz is the Secretary General of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and is also a practicing doctor. Since the outbreak began, he has been treating Covid-19 patients, witnessing first-hand how difficult the situation is in Pakistan:

"There is a specialised treatment centre near the capital city. We have treated hundreds of patients there. If you ask me of my experience, both as an organisation head and a medical doctor, it was tough to treat those patients. Oxygen was not available in the country, and we are trying to cope with a shortage of things.

Volunteers have been the backbone of our support and response. The staff members are there on the frontline working to help people of course, but we needed help from our volunteers. We trained around 1,000 volunteers and gave them targets in different cities across Pakistan to provide psychosocial support to anyone affected by Covid, patients and families who might have lost their loved ones.

The pandemic has led us to another consensus that no country, no matter how developed it is, can deal with this phenomenon alone. Everybody has to come together; different countries have to come together to deal with this."

Pakistan Red Crescent Society is engaging with people and communities across the country to provide accurate information about the COVID-19 virus. Whether on social media, direct conversations or through mobile health camps, Red Crescent volunteers are reaching out to thousands of people with important hygiene information and awareness raising activities.



Sri Lanka



260,972 confirmed cases



50,580 people supported with water, sanitation and hygiene activities



Five million opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

Sri Lanka is currently experiencing a third wave of Covid-19 cases, with the highest number of cases being reported in densely populated districts in the western province such as Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara. With an average of 3,000 positive cases per day, the country's health system is being put under significant strain. Health authorities suspect that the more transmissible Delta variant of the virus is having a critical impact on the younger generation which was not seen previously.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has been responding since the onset of the pandemic and its reach extends across all districts of Sri Lanka. In total, **653 SLRCS staff and volunteers** have been deployed to support the Covid-19 response, volunteering for a total of **31,301 hours**. To ensure their safety and wellbeing, all volunteers have received training and have access to mental health support.

Raising awareness among communities

As the pandemic worsens in Sri Lanka, the work of SLRCS in educating communities on the ongoing risk the virus poses and importance of vaccinations has become increasingly critical. The team have been sharing guidance in three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English), and promoting their educational messages on social media, the SLRCS website, TV advertisements and posters. In total, the SLRCS has reached over **five million people** with health and hygiene promotion messages.

Supporting those most in need

The pandemic has led to new or increased vulnerabilities in communities, with people losing their jobs, struggling to put food on the table, and facing loneliness and isolation due to social distancing guidelines. Government and private sector functions and ceremonies have been banned, schools, universities and business centres have been closed, and restrictions on movement have been imposed. These measures have disproportionately impacted low-income groups and informal sector workers.

The SLRCS has been helping to build people's resilience to these fluctuating circumstances and ensure their basic needs continue to be met. Over **26,000 people** have been supported through food and other in-kind assistance. Wellbeing support has also been provided, prioritising people self-isolating, shielding, quarantined in isolation centres or the loved ones of people who have the virus. The support is tailored to the individual's need, including practical support, social re-integration and fear and panic management.



Photo: © Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS)

SLRCS volunteers have also been disinfecting busy areas to help minimise the risk of infection.

Botswana



70,071 confirmed cases



955,494 opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices



12,269 people made vulnerable by Covid-19 reached with cash support, food and other in-kind assistance

The number of reported Covid-19 cases in Botswana is rising, with more people at risk of catching the virus due to inconsistent testing, home isolation, contact tracing and follow-up. People's vulnerability to the pandemic has been compounded by additional crises such as a devastating locust outbreak in September 2020. The infestation led to crops being ravaged in certain parts of the country such as the Northwest and Chobe, threatening the food supply and livelihoods in Botswana and neighbouring countries.

In response, the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) has deployed over **3,400 volunteers** across the country to support Covid-19 response activities including providing access to water and food, raising awareness of the risks associated with the pandemic and promoting how to protect themselves, including demonstrating good hygiene practices.

Curbing the spread of the virus

BRCS volunteers have been working with households in the Dukwi refugee camp to help strengthen their resilience, from providing information on contact tracing and crowd management, to helping people to safely quarantine or isolate within the camp.

BRCS has also taken steps to reduce the spread of the virus, for example, by helping to set up isolation centres in boarding schools, when



Photo: © BRCS

BRCS supported migrants affected by Covid-19 response protocols across Botswana with food vouchers.

Covid-19 cases have been confirmed. This has helped to reduce the number of affected people being sent back to communities where they risk passing the virus on to their families and neighbours.

Since the arrival of vaccines in March 2021, BRCS has also been supporting the vaccination rollout. As of the start of July, over **159,000 people** had been vaccinated nationwide, including health care workers, people over 55, and other frontline workers such as security staff and teachers. Over **1,000 BRCS volunteers** have been supporting this national rollout, including managing the registration process, providing support to elderly and other vulnerable people during the vaccination itself, supporting patients in home isolation, and assisting with screening and registering at hot spots such as schools, health facilities and port entries.

Providing food and cash support

In addition to the food distributed among migrant populations (as reported in November 2020), BRCS expanded its focus to include families that were affected by Covid-19 and whose socio-economic status had been low and was exacerbated by the pandemic. This targeted **500 families** through a voucher system, enabling them to purchase food of their choosing. In total, BRCS has supported **6,000 people** with food and other in-kind assistance; and **6,269 people** made vulnerable by the pandemic have been reached with cash and voucher assistance.

Cameroon



80,858 confirmed cases



56,500 people reached with cash support, food and other in-kind assistance



4,177,450 opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

Cameroon has recorded more than **80,858 Covid-19 positive cases including 1,324 deaths**, which has affected the lives and livelihoods of communities across the country. The Cameroon Red Cross (CRC) has been supporting those most affected since the outbreak, including urban and rural areas considered as epicentres of the pandemic such as central, littoral, western, Adamawa and southern regions.

Raising awareness of the virus and how to protect yourself against it has been a key priority for the CRC. Through mass sensitisation campaigns on radio and TV they have reached over **4 million** people with messages on good health and hygiene practices, such as hand washing and social distancing guidance. Water, sanitation and hygiene kits have been distributed to the most vulnerable populations to help them practice these techniques and disinfection activities have been conducted in busy areas such as universities, schools and markets.

CRC's response to Covid-19

In addition to the activities reported in the mid-year report, the CRC has reached:

- **6,014 people** to test for Covid-19
- **2,313,538 people** through community water, sanitation and hygiene activities
- **540 people** with psychosocial support, supporting their mental wellbeing
- **83,225 people** with essential community health services, ensuring people can continue to access vital healthcare assistance during the pandemic.

Providing food and cash support

Covid-19 has impacted people's lives and livelihoods in Cameroon, making it difficult for them to meet their basic needs. The CRC has been providing a variety of support to help build the resilience of those most affected, helping them to put food on the table and regain their independence. In total, CRC has reached **54,000 people** with food and other in-kind assistance, and **2,500 people** with cash support. In addition, **11,370 people** have been equipped with skills development to help them restore and strengthen their livelihoods.

Raising awareness in communities

In recent months, the CRC has also been supporting schools reopening after lockdown. Many were reopening with little or no protective equipment and materials to curb the spread of Covid-19. The CRC has therefore been providing handwashing stations and soap to enable both teachers and students to practice good hygiene practices and limit the risk of the virus spreading while at school.



Photo: © CRC

School hand washing stations provided by the CRC.

Kenya



184,161 confirmed cases



591,493 people reached with food and other in-kind assistance



14 million opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

Since the start of the pandemic, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) has been the Kenyan government's emergency response partner of choice. As such, the KRCS is often the first point of contact for information on many areas including Covid-19, food relief, counselling and case reporting.

As cases rise with the Delta variant spreading across western Kenya, and renewed containment measures in place such as curfews to try and stem the spread of this strain, the KRCS and its 24-hour emergency operations centre remain a vital part of the Covid-19 response.

KRCS's response to Covid-19

KRCS provides a holistic package of support nationwide. Key achievements include:

- **150 KRCS staff and volunteers** supported screenings in health facilities and points of entry such as ferries, airports, bus terminals, helping to curb the virus at these hot spots
- **282 health facilities** supported, helping maintain access to healthcare for the surrounding communities
- **785,487 people** supported through community water, sanitation and hygiene activities, further reducing transmission rates
- **Over 12,900 people** reached with mental health services, helping them to look after their wellbeing during the pandemic
- **591,493 people** made vulnerable by the virus reached with food and other in-kind assistance, ensuring their basic needs are met.

Raising awareness among communities

KRCS has reached over **14 million people** with information about the risks of the virus and ways to prevent the spread. To ensure these messages were shared with remote communities living in areas of the country that are hard to reach, drones were used as an innovative way to get the message out. These were particularly helpful in reaching people living in slums where passages are restricted, extending the reach of communication while reducing contact and therefore potential exposure to the virus.

Supporting people's wellbeing

The pandemic has affected businesses, and many people have lost their jobs, causing increasing numbers of people to experience anxiety and stress. To support people during this challenging time, KRCS volunteers and staff carried out various activities to support individuals and groups to look after their mental health, including tele-counselling. As with the drones, this digital solution made support more accessible for remote, hard-to-reach communities while also helping to keep people safer by reducing the need for face-to-face meetings.



Photo: © John Bundi / Kenya Red Cross Society

A KRCS volunteer conducting a door-to-door sensitisation campaign in the Kondele Informal Settlements, distributing hand sanitiser and raising awareness of the virus and protective measures.

Nigeria



167,618 confirmed cases



162,857 people received psychosocial support



33,544,983 opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) has continued to complement the efforts of the Government of Nigeria in responding to and curbing the spread of the pandemic. In addition to awareness raising campaigns, ambulance support, and cash assistance, this now also extends to supporting the Covid-19 vaccination programme. NRCS has been involved in developing the process of this national rollout and will be working closely with communities in the coming months to help understand and address misconceptions and build trust to maximise the uptake.

Providing cash support

A key pillar of NRCS' response has been to provide cash support to vulnerable individuals across the country. Beneficiaries were selected based on need, with the elderly, female or child-headed households, people living with disabilities and those chronically ill among those supported. In total, **21,600 people** received cash support, giving them the independence to purchase essential items for their family based on their individual needs.

NRCS also used this as an opportunity to share Covid-19 information with recipients, supporting their health and wellbeing in addition to their livelihoods. In the cash distribution sites, wall banners were displayed with information on Covid-19 preventative measures (e.g. wearing face masks), and the NRCS hotline number and social media handles for enquiries and feedback. A one-minute sign-language video with subtitles was also produced, increasing accessibility to Covid-19 guidelines among those with impaired hearing and speech difficulties.

Promoting access to healthcare

The NRCS has been supporting NRCS-owned health facilities and children's homes in 12 states to reduce the likelihood of healthcare associated infection, helping to keep both patients and staff safe. Support has included training staff and volunteers, providing personal protective equipment and hand washing stations and quality assurance of clinical services. Ambulance services have also been activated with volunteers trained on infection prevention and control, including how to safely transport people with suspected cases of Covid-19 to designated testing and treatment centres. These efforts are helping to ensure healthcare remains accessible to those in need, while minimising the risk of transmission.



Photo: © NRCS

NRCS also joined a local radio station to share information about Covid-19, extending their reach.

Sierra Leone



5,575 confirmed cases



5,738 people have been supported with cash assistance



913,720 opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

As a third wave of cases sweeps across Sierra Leone, lockdowns and restrictions have been reimposed to curb the spread. However, despite their critical role in protecting people's health, these restrictions are placing further strain on people already struggling to meet their basic needs. Rural areas are expected to be particularly impacted, as communities already face complex risks and often have poor access to healthcare services. In this context, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) is continuing to address the health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic, with a particular focus on women, elderly people, people living with disabilities and those living in vulnerable communities.

Raising awareness among communities

A key part of SLRCS' Covid-19 response has been to raise awareness among communities of the risk and transmission, causes, symptoms, prevention and treatment of the virus. One innovative way that they have engaged communities is through the support of social influencers, enlisting community leaders, drama groups, singing groups and sports players to share Covid-19 prevention and control measures in captivating, fun ways. Supported by volunteers to ensure that the messaging remained accurate, these have helped encourage communities to practice positive behaviours and address fears, rumours and stigma through question-and-answer sessions.



Community meetings are a great way for people to come together, share their concerns and receive up-to-date advice.

SLRCS has also held quarterly dialogue sessions in seven targeted districts, providing two-hour sessions where community members are able to share their stories, concerns and feedback as well as suggestions on Covid-19. The sessions also provided a platform for encouraging positive behaviours, attitudes and perceptions to the virus prevention measures.

As a result, many communities have been able to clarify their roles and responsibilities in relation to adhering to Covid-19 prevention measures, drawing up community byelaws that helped to improve acceptability of the prevention measures and in turn leading to a reduction in new cases.



The quarterly dialogue sessions have helped my community to examine their thoughts and perceptions around Covid-19. With all the ideas and many views expressed, it helped my community realise that we are not alone, and that's just what we needed to give people the strength to save their family and community.

Chief Pa Alimamy Bangura, Pailap Community, Kambia district.





Photo: © SLRCS

SLRCS engaging with community groups to raise awareness of Covid-19 and what they can do to prevent it spreading.

Answering people's questions and concerns

SLRCS also runs a hotline for people to call in with questions and concerns, and access up-to-date information about the virus and preventative measures. Questions and concerns include:

- "Many people say that hot water, lemon juice, honey, ginger and traditional plants are effective remedies for Covid-19."
- "Can I remove facemask in public place after using it for a long time?"
- "How can people be cured of corona?"

Providing cash support

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the poorest and most vulnerable households in Sierra Leone. Social distancing measures introduced to contain the spread of the virus have exacerbated existing vulnerability and reduced people's resilience, making it increasingly harder for them to meet their basic needs.

Thanks to Standard Chartered Bank's support, SLRCS has been able to implement a new cash-based assistance programme, providing cash grants to **5,738 people** between December 2020 and March 2021. Those reached included female-headed households, households headed by people with a disability, Covid-19 survivors and sexual and gender-based violence survivors. Sexual and gender-based violence is a serious and urgent concern in Sierra Leone and it is feared that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already widespread issue, with women in particular taking on unpaid care roles, losing income and living in closer proximity to abusers.

These cash grants enabled people to meet their most urgent essential needs, with food, medicines and utilities being the top expenditures. Almost all (**97%**) reported that SLRCS's cash assistance had significantly improved their living conditions and reduced financial burden. Food insecurity is still prevalent in the target area, however, and it remains a priority of SLRCS to continue to support the most vulnerable food insecure households.



**“A very big thank
you to SLRCS for
restoring some
dignity to my family”.**

Mamy Fatu Koroma's story

Mamy Fatu Koroma lives in Magbuckwarr village, Portloko District in Sierra Leone. She is a widow with six children and her household is one of the vulnerable households that received the SLRCS' cash-based assistance who told us her story to share with others.

“I am a 70-year-old widow with six children and eight grandchildren. Life has been difficult for my family ever since I lost my husband and my first son in a car accident. Both were the bread winners of the family. Their death caused us so much pain and tears, my other children are not working they all depend on me to support the family. I cannot afford to send my grandchildren to school and providing their daily meal is very difficult for us.

The Covid-19 has affected me and my family greatly as we could not continue some of the petty trading that enabled me to provide some food. Even now after the lockdown was lifted, it has not been the same as we do not have any income to continue with any form of trading.

As God could have it for us, we have been selected as one of the beneficiaries of the SLRCS cash transfer assistance in Magbuckworr village, Portloko District. In December 2020, I received the cash sum of SLL1,250,000 (US\$124.56) from SLRCS as support under their Covid-19 response project. Due to my current predicament, together with my family we decided on how we could manage life with this support received from SLRCS. We agreed to plan to use 20% for school materials for my grandchildren, 20% for agricultural activities, 40% for business and 20% for our daily meal for the household.

A very big thank you to SLRCS for restoring some dignity to my family”.

South Africa



1,973,972 confirmed cases



858,723 people reached with food and other in-kind assistance



1,748,835 opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

As South Africa enters its third wave of the pandemic, social distancing measures are being re-imposed to try and curb the spread. Amidst this health crisis, the social and economic impacts of the virus continue to be keenly felt, with many people left unemployed and some small businesses have shut down due to economic shock. Unemployment remains an unmet need and, combined with the ongoing uncertainty as the pandemic continues, many people are suffering from stress and anxiety.

Supporting people's wellbeing

Many people are struggling to cope with the social and emotional impacts of Covid-19. In response, the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) has been helping to build people's resilience, providing tailored support such as coping skills, grief and bereavement counselling, conflict resolution and survival skills to deal with uncertainty. In total, **21,244 people** have been reached with mental wellbeing support services, including **64 SARCS volunteers and staff** who tested positive for Covid-19.

Raising awareness among communities

SARCS has also been providing timely, reliable information about the virus and the vaccination campaign to address the misconceptions, rumours and myths that surround it. Since the start of the pandemic, **3,250 volunteers** have been trained in different aspects of the Covid-19 response, from risk communication

and community engagement, to testing and contact tracing. In total, **1.7 million people** have been reached through SARCS' community engagement interventions.

As part of this, SARCS has been working closely with the Department of Health on a national vaccination awareness campaign to inspire collective action to minimise and manage the impact of Covid-19. To date, **2,000 SARCS volunteers** have been actively involved in vaccination interventions, reaching over **500,000 people**.

Curbing the spread of the virus

Due to the contagious nature of Covid-19, SARCS has been promoting good hygiene practices and behaviours to prevent its spread. Hygiene packs were also distributed to communities in high-risk areas such as informal settlements and high-density suburbs, as well as to vulnerable individuals such as orphaned children and people living with disabilities. To further promote good handwashing behaviours, SARCS piloted the installation of **25 handwashing facilities** in densely populated areas, reaching **475,000 people**. Alongside this, volunteers have continuously provided public education and demonstrations on good handwashing behaviours.



Photo: © SARCS / IFRC

SARCS volunteers distribute information health and hygiene practices to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 in the Eastern Cape.

Tanzania



509 confirmed cases



1812 people reached with psychosocial support



47.8 million opportunities for people to access guidance on health and hygiene practices

The spread of Covid-19 in Tanzania is hard to track, with the number of confirmed cases reported to the World Health Organisation unchanged for almost a year. Since May 2021, however, a shift has been seen in the Government's approach to the pandemic. Vaccines have been allowed since mid-May 2021, and the President has reported a further 100 cases of Covid-19 in June 2021*. Vaccinations are voluntary, but health care workers, the tourism sector, people aged 50 and above, international staff and travellers are being recommended to take the vaccine.

The Tanzania Red Cross Society (TRCS) has been working since the start of the pandemic to raise awareness of the pandemic, focusing particularly on refugee settlements and education centres where social distancing is harder. Since the start of the country's vaccination programme, TRCS has also been supporting the government in the roll-out.

Responding to Covid-19

TRCS has been reaching local communities with a holistic package of support, which has included:

- **750 people** tested by TRCS for Covid-19.
- **63 health facilities** have been supported, helping them to continue providing vital healthcare assistance to local communities
- **73,244 people** engaged in water, sanitation and hygiene community activities
- **1,812 people** reached with psychosocial support, helping to look after their mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

Raising awareness among communities

A key pillar of TRCS' Covid-19 response has been community engagement, **with over 47 million opportunities to view risk communication messages** on health and hygiene practices since the start of the pandemic. In densely populated areas, this has included using mobile vans and megaphones to reach as many people as possible with announcements related to the virus. TRCS has also taken a more targeted approach, mapping out the most at-risk areas and intensifying communication activities there. This has helped to ensure that particularly vulnerable groups are equipped with tactics to reduce their chance of catching or spreading the virus, such as handwashing, social distancing and mask wearing.

TRCS has also been strengthening its ties with local government authorities and community influencers, to gain access to new channels of engagement to raise awareness of the virus, preventative measures, and the vaccine.



Photo: © TRCS

TRCS staff and volunteers have been working within communities to equip children and adults with hygiene practices to help protect them from the virus.

* <https://www.voanews.com/africa/tanzania-publishes-first-covid-19-data-over-year>

Thank you



Richard Blewitt,
Executive director
international,
British Red Cross

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The start of 2021 has been a challenging one, with new waves of Covid-19 sweeping across both Africa and Asia Pacific. Existing inequalities are being amplified and people are falling into extremely vulnerable situations as a result. Many are struggling to access medical care, food and water, as well as vital Covid-19 prevention items, such as masks and hand sanitiser, to protect themselves against the virus.

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And the pandemic is not existing in a vacuum. On top of the physical, social and emotional impacts of the pandemic are other intersecting crises, from civil unrest in Myanmar to a devastating locust outbreak in Botswana.

Thanks to Standard Chartered Bank's support, Red Cross and Red Crescent teams have been working with communities over the past year to respond to the immediate impacts of the pandemic and help build their resilience to future waves.

It has also enabled Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers to strengthen their relationships with local communities. The community trust that has been developed is providing a strong foundation from which to draw upon as vaccination programmes develop. Moving forward, Red Cross and Red Crescent teams will be able to use their trusted voice to

engage and educate communities to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase uptake, curbing the spread and enabling National Societies to look beyond response to recovery.

Thank you for your trust, collaboration and flexible funding, which has enabled National Societies to respond quickly and efficiently to the changing needs of their communities. From reaching remote communities with support and advice on preventing the spread of Covid-19, to providing cash assistance to help people regain their independence, we have been there for people when they need it most. You have helped to make this work possible and we are truly grateful for your support.

Thank you

Cover photo: Ibrahim Mollik / IFRC

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) with the support from the IFRC and partners, distributed multipurpose cash assistance to the local community in in Ramu, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

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