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Information bulletin

Asia Pacific: Coronavirus outbreak

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Glide n° EP-2020-000013-MYS	Date of issue: 24 January 2020
Date of disaster: 31 December 2019	Point of contact: Oyungerel Amgaa, IFRC Regional Health Coordinator
Operation start date: TBC	Expected timeframe: TBC
Category of disaster: Orange	
Number of people affected: The number is growing all the time but as of 23 January 2020: 571 confirmed cases, with 17 deaths.	Number of people to be assisted: TBC
N° of National Societies currently involved in the operation: All 38 National Societies in the Asia Pacific Region	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: World Health Organization (WHO), Government health authorities in affected countries	

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) is assessing the situation and is potentially seeking funding through Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) activation.

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The situation

On 31 December 2019, the Wuhan city in China was reported to have cases of unknown pneumonic disease. On 9 January 2020, the virus was identified to be a Coronavirus – a virus from a broad family that can range from less severe cases similar to the common cold to more serious illnesses including Severe acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The novel coronavirus is named as 2019-nCoV. By 23 January, 571 cases were confirmed, primarily in Wuhan Province in China, with some individuals carrying the disease outside China including to Thailand, Republic of Korea and Japan. The number of suspected cases is growing fast in China, and as people get tested, the number of confirmed cases will rise. Below is the chronology of the outbreak since 31 December 2019:

31 December 2019	The government of China reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei Province.
1 January 2020	The market suspected to be the origin of the outbreak is closed.
9 January 2020	WHO announces that the outbreak in Wuhan is caused by a previously unknown type of coronavirus. The virus is called 2019-nCoV.
11 January 2020	The first death of coronavirus was declared by Chinese health authorities.
13 January 2020	The virus spreads cross borders for the first time as Thailand announces their first case, a person who has travelled from Wuhan.
16 January 2020	The first case of the virus is confirmed in Japan, also exported from Wuhan.
17-19 January 2020	The number of confirmed cases identifies grew exponentially as the testing for the virus enables reliable results.
20 January 2020	Republic of Korea reported the first case of novel coronavirus.

There remain uncertainties about the severity of this epidemic; the mode of transmission and infectiousness are yet to be defined. Based on the current understanding of the new coronavirus, maximum incubation period is 14 days. The IFRC APRO, through the IFRC Country Offices (CO) and Country Cluster Support Teams (CCST), is monitoring and assessing the situation and taking steps to help National Societies prepare for the outbreak and manage risks. It is still unknown whether human-to-human transmission is possible, and reflecting the previous lessons learned from SARS and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), it is important to be prepared and ready to respond.



IFRC has been communicating the health messages in Social media to increase awareness of coronavirus and how to prevent the possible transmission. *(Photo: IFRC communications)*

IFRC APRO is concerned about the coming Chinese New Year / Lunar New Year knowing that millions of people are on a move to visit their families and relatives, not only in China but cross continent.

Several countries have informed about safety measures taken by, for example doing entry screenings at the airports and providing travel advisories.

The WHO International Health Regulations Emergency Committee has reconvened on 23 January 2020 and determined that the Wuhan Coronavirus outbreak did not constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) at this stage, but “Committee members agreed on the urgency of the situation and suggested that the Committee should be reconvened in a matter of days to examine the situation further” (source: WHO website).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

IFRC APRO is coordinating with National Societies through its CO) and CCST. IFRC APRO is monitoring the situation, issuing advisories, providing key messages and fact sheets along with guidance notes to support all 38 National Societies in the region. IFRC APRO is recommending all its offices to review their contingency plans and office readiness plans, undertake scenario planning and analyse risk in their respective countries/areas, and take first steps to ensure.

IFRC is actively coordinating with WHO and other stakeholders. Partner National Societies that have experience and specialist knowledge will be requested for support. National Societies are coordinating with their governments.

The Red Cross Society of China has sent information to all branches to help prevent further spread. Headquarters and all branches are posting information on social media. Japanese Red Cross Society and Republic of Korea National Red Cross are preparing to mobilise assistance. Philippine Red Cross, Thai Red Cross Society and Myanmar Red Cross Society have shared prevention messages on social media.

IFRC APRO through its CO and CCST is planning to support all 38 National Societies in the region with regards to preparedness, sensitization and response activities through a DREF activation.



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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.
