**Common Questions**

**Statistical Information**

*Please share any information and data on the availability of health services to ensure access to testing, personal protective equipment and treatment.*

* **(Testing and Treatment)** Under the Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act, The Government of the Republic of Korea has implemented a system for accessible testing and treatment of COVID-19 to anyone in need. Any suspected case or a patient under investigation according to the case definition can get tested without charge, and anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 can get treated without charge. The ROK government is also ensuring access to testing and treatment for vulnerable or high-risk groups including migrants without legal status and migrant workers.
* **(Filtering Respirators and Surgical Masks)** After experiencing a shortage of masks and respirators supply in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, the ROK government adopted a public rationing program to secure even distribution of filtering respirators to the public, which has since greatly contributed to stabilizing its distribution and prices. The government has also waived import requirement verification for filtering respirators and surgical masks to expedite the clearance process and thus enable swift distribution of masks to nursing homes and the affected areas among others. The local authorities have also been distributing free filtering respirators and surgical masks to high-risk groups including elderly people, children, persons with underlying medical conditions, and pregnant women in accordance with Article 49-2 of the Infections Disease Control and Prevention Act.
* For further information, please visit the official website of Republic of Korea for the pandemic (<http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/en>).

**Protection of various groups at risk and indigenous peoples**

*What measures have public authorities taken to protect high-risk populations from COVID-19?*

* **(Children)** Following the delay of scheduled opening of schools in early March due to rising concerns over the spread of COVID-19 to children, the ROK government is making its efforts to ensure children’s right to education despite the pandemic.
* (Online Opening) The Ministry of Education decided to open schools online with different stages starting with senior grades in middle and high schools on April 9, and completing with three lower graders in elementary schools on April 20. The Ministry of Education worked together with Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education to lend 283,000 digital devices to students in low-income households. In addition, 17 Provincial Offices of Education subsidizes Internet subscription fees to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, to ensure inclusive participation of all students in online classes. Furthermore, through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and ICT and three major telecommunications companies, educational websites such as Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) can be temporarily accessed for free without data usage.
* (Phased opening) The Ministry of Education announced plans to open schools in four phases starting with the senior grade of high-school on May 20. Given that sporadic cluster infections have continued in Korea despite the flattened curve, the ROK government is advising schools to combine online and offline schooling methods, in line with its efforts to find the right balance between mitigating health risks and ensuring children’s right to education.
* **(Migrants)** Having suspended its operations to identify migrants without legal status, the ROK government is now providing them with free testing and treatment for COVID-19.
* **(Persons Living in Nursing Homes)** The government and a number of local authorities have conducted preemptive COVID-19 testing for persons living in nursing homes and convalescent hospitals, as they have been identified as high-risk populations.

**Social protection**

*Please provide information on implemented and planned adjustments to the social safety net in response to the crisis, to ensure that individuals who lost all or part of their income as a consequence of the pandemic have access to sufficient nutrition, housing, water and sanitation, health care, energy and other essential goods and services.*

* **(Emergency Disaster Relief Fund)** To mitigate economic and social impact on people’s lives due to COVID-19, the ROK government has provided the emergency relief funds for each and every household. The ROK government made available a variety of options for the application process such as through internet websites, banks, and community centers. For those who have difficulties in applying for relief packages due to physical disabilities or age-related challenges, local government officials have visited their residences to help their application. As of June 8, more than 99.5 percent of the Korean households have received the payments.
* **(Additional Relief for Low-income Households**) The ROK government is providing disaster allowances in vouchers for low-income households, between April and July, in order to help those households sustain livelihoods.

**Awareness raising and technology**

*What awareness-raising activities have been undertaken by the State to inform groups in vulnerable situation of health risks associated with COVID-19?*

* The ROK government is fully committed to prompt and transparent sharing of information on developments in our COVID-19 situation and government policies with all the affected and concerned populations. ROK’s Infections Disease Control and Prevention Act specifically ensures the public’s right to be informed on the latest developments and response to outbreaks and infection control.
* **(Press Briefing)** The ROK government has been carrying out press briefings twice a day on the COVID-19 situation in Korea, often highlighting its health risks and the government measures to counter them, with sign language interpretation for persons with hearing disabilities. The briefings have also been broadcast by Arirang TV in English particularly for migrants in Korea
* **(Online Information)** The ROK government has created a website dedicated to COVID-19 whereby related agencies share COVID-19 information including medical facts, statistics on confirmed cases disaggregated by sex, age, and region, press releases, supply status of rationed face masks, locations of screening stations, and relief packages. Regular press releases that cover a wide range of information are also provided daily in Korean, English, and Chinese: number of confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19, number of tests performed, regional distribution of confirmed cases, epidemiological links, number of contacts under quarantine, number of discharges cases, and other statistics ((<http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/en>).
* As Korea is one of the most wired countries and its internet access is almost universal, the ROK government is harnessing the internet as a major medium to effectively disseminate information. According to the latest survey by the Ministry of Science and ICT, household internet access rate in Korea stood at 99.7% as of 2019.

**Questions by the Independent Expert on the human rights of older persons**

*Please provide information on reports, speeches, and measures which had a special focus on older persons during the pandemic*.

* **(Press Briefings & Releases)** The ROK government’s regular press briefings (twice a day) and press releases on COVID-19 have consistently focused on the vulnerabilities of older persons and special measures to be taken to protect them. For example, the press release dated on June 17 elaborates on the results of a study by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) on recent clusters from elderly-related facilities and shed a light on precautionary measures to prevent further infections in such facilities. All the press releases are currently available in English at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/en>.
* **(Health Guidelines for the Elderly)** The KCDC issued health guidelines for older persons and other high-risk groups including persons with underlying health conditions and pregnant women. The guidelines are posted online daily as an attachment under press releases and are available at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/en>.
* **(Filtering Respirators and Surgical Masks)** According to Article 49-2 (enacted March 2020) of the Infections Disease Control and Prevention Act, a number of local authorities have provided filtering respirators and surgical masks for free to older persons.