

# Pakistan

16-29 May 2020

## Overview

- The number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan continues to rise, with the total number growing to more than 62,800 on 29 May 2020, and 1,280 deaths being recorded.<sup>1</sup> Two refugees in the province of Balochistan tested positive for COVID-19 and were admitted into the Government's Sheikh Zaid Hospital. Another refugee in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tested positive and was home quarantined. Three Afghan refugees have died so far.
- On 18 May 2020, the Government of Pakistan further eased lockdown restrictions. Markets and shopping areas reopened ahead of Eid celebrations on 24 May. Public transportation and domestic flights resumed. The Government issued standard ) operating procedures (SOPs for physical distancing in public places, but overcrowding was nevertheless witnessed. The Government warned that a stricter lockdown may be enforced again if precautionary measures continue to be ignored.
- In mid-May, the Government resumed operations at the Torkham and Chaman border-crossing points. The borders were reopened six days a week for Afghan transit and bilateral trade. Saturdays are reserved for pedestrians. On 20-22 May, Torkham border was opened on an exceptional basis to allow more than 2,500 stranded Afghan citizens to return to Afghanistan in time for Eid celebrations.
- On 20 May, while addressing the World Economic Forum, Prime Minister Imran Khan, who joined remotely, reiterated his call for global debt relief. He noted that "when this pandemic hit the world, every country became insular but ultimately, we are all connected, and therefore our response has to be global." He justified the easing of the lockdown in Pakistan by referring to the large number of daily wage earners in the informal sector, the severe impact on existing poverty levels, and the overall massive negative impact on the national economy.
- The Government's *Ehsaas* emergency cash assistance programme has reached some 9.2 million deserving Pakistani families, expending nearly Rs.112 billion (approximately \$700 million). Families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to help meet their most urgent needs for four months. On 18 May, the Government launched the fourth phase of *Ehsaas* programme aimed at providing assistance to those who lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown.

## Operational highlights

### Social protection

- On 20 May 2020, UNHCR began the disbursement of emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugee families in Pakistan. Some 36,000 families will be the initial beneficiaries of this emergency cash assistance by UNHCR through the Pakistan Post. It will help the most vulnerable refugee families meet their urgent needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency cash mirrors the Government's *Ehsaas* emergency cash programme, where vulnerable families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to cover a four-month period. Those eligible for the emergency assistance include refugees with disabilities or serious medical conditions, as well as single parents.
- On 15 May, UNHCR held the fourth meeting of the Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG). The members agreed to share their activities for better coordination. At the provincial level, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and partners, held the first Protection Sector



*At Golra Post Office in Islamabad, the Federal Minister for SAFRON presents cash assistance to an Afghan refugee.*  
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<sup>1</sup> For the latest official statistics on COVID-19, please visit the Government of Pakistan's portal:  
<http://covid.gov.pk/stats/pakistan>.

Working Group meeting in Peshawar on 18 May. UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNFPA and other key stakeholders participated.

### Communicating with communities

- UNHCR and partners continued to engage with refugees who face multiple challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of livelihoods. UNHCR staff visited refugee villages in Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan and Mansehra districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Outreach activities were also carried out in the refugee villages in Balochistan and Punjab. The purpose of these visits was to show solidarity with the refugees during these difficult times, assess protection trends and risks, and monitor the implementation of UNHCR-supported activities.
- UNHCR and partners have prioritized the use of digital communication, including outreach by telephone, WhatsApp messaging and other social media formats, in order to disseminate information within refugee communities while following the Government's directives on physical distancing. In some cases, direct sensitization activities with outreach volunteers and focal points were carried out in small groups. In addition, informational materials for UNHCR's emergency cash programme were distributed among the communities.

### Health

- Community engagement through community health workers and social mobilizers is being carried out through *shuras* and religious leaders. Ensuring physical distancing protocols are adhered, community health workers and UNHCR partner staff held meetings and health education sessions at the community and health facilities levels. UNHCR, through partners, continued to distribute medical supplies, including surgical masks, gloves, gowns and infrared thermometers to frontline medical and partner staff working in health facilities in the refugee villages and communities.



UNHCR staff unload the in-kind donation generously provided by private sector partner, Unilever.  
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### WASH

- The reconstruction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in some of the 21 Mother and Child Health Centers in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was initiated after the Eid celebrations. Activities include the repair of toilets, hand washing areas and water systems. Incinerators and waste bins will also be provided.

### Funding needs

In line with the revised UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, UNHCR's revised appeal amounts to \$745 million. As of 26 May 2020, UNHCR had received \$235 million, or 32 per cent of the requirements.

In Pakistan, UNHCR's requirements reach \$20.6 million. Since the launch of the appeal, UNHCR in Pakistan has received the generous contributions of \$2.4 million from the Government of the United States of America and \$1 million from the Government of Japan. UNHCR has also received an in-kind donation of soap and disinfectants from private sector partner, Unilever.

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### USD 745M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally until the end of the year:

