

Pakistan

August 2020

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan is slowly improving with a smaller number of new cases and deaths reported in the past month. The total number of cases as of 31 August was 295,849 with 6,294 deaths. There were 8,873 active cases while some 280,682 people had recovered. The average number of daily confirmed cases has fallen to less than 500 in the last week of August, as compared to some 1,500 in July. No new cases were reported among the Afghan refugee community. However, seventeen Afghan refugees have so far tested positive and most of them have recovered. Very sadly, five of them have died.



UNHCR Representative, Noriko Yoshida met with SAPM for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Dr. Sania Nishtar to discuss Ehsaas Program and socio-economic challenges faced by the most vulnerable persons of concern during the COVID -19 pandemic, including Afghan refugees. © UNHCR/S. Saad

With the downward trend in COVID-19 cases, UNHCR is slowly resuming its normal activities after putting in place all possible measures to prevent the spread of the infectious disease. From 17 August, the Proof of Registration Cards Modification Centres (PCMs) resumed their operations to provide documentation services to Afghan refugees. Similarly, UNHCR resumed the voluntary repatriation operation from 10 August 2020.



Social Protection

More than 32,000 vulnerable Afghan families (approximately 197,010 people) have so far received UNHCR's emergency cash assistance that mirrors the Government's *Ehsaas* emergency cash programme, where vulnerable families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to cover a four-month period. US\$ 2.4 million have been distributed so far. Cash assistance is being distributed in 55 districts and 54 refugee villages across Pakistan through an innovative partnership with the Pakistan Post Office.



An Afghan refugee woman is receiving cash assistance at the Golra Post Office in Islamabad. © UNHCR/A. Shehzad

32,000 vulnerable refugee families have so far received emergency cash assistance



Communication with Communities

UNHCR's extensive network of refugee Outreach Volunteers and community mobilizers continued to amplify important health and hygiene messages on COVID-19 prevention and response in refugee communities. UNHCR and partners reachout to communities in several ways. With the easing of restrictions on movement,

focus group discussions, individual counselling and interviews with refugees are being carried out while observing physical distancing and COVID-19 prevention protocols. UNHCR and partners are also using digital communication, including outreach by telephone, WhatsApp messaging and other social media formats.

16,300 refugee Outreach Volunteers, community committees and community leaders and 9,700 refugees helped UNHCR reachout to the Afghan refugee population.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Fourteen new WASH activities were initiated in August, out of which eight were completed. These activities included water supply schemes, digging of boreholes and general repair and rehabilitation work in refugee villages in Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Over 140 water, sanitation and hygiene projects have been completed by UNHCR and partners in the COVID-19 response.



A UNHCR team is inspecting a recently installed washing facility in refugee village Timer, Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During these visits UNHCR staff also meets with the community members to disseminate messages on COVID-19 situation and receive community feedback on UNHCR and partners' assistance. ©UNHCR/Jamal Khalid



Health

UNHCR continued the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to government and NGO partners and to community members who are carrying out essential outreach and other frontline activities. UNHCR also donated 5,000 non-woven disposable coveralls to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) for COVID-19 first responders. These coveralls were prepared by refugees.

So far, more than 53,000 masks, 54,000 gloves and 4,000 gowns have been distributed.



A UNHCR team visited the Mother and Child Health Centre in Jalala refugee village in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to meet with partner staff and assess the community health needs. ©UNHCR/A. Rehman

Funding

In line with the revised UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, UNHCR's global appeal amounts to \$745 million. UNHCR has so far received \$460 million, or 62 per cent of the requirements. In Pakistan, UNHCR's requirements amount to \$20.6 million. UNHCR has received generous contributions from the governments of Japan and the United States of America, as well as from the European Union (Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development). UNHCR has also received in-kind donations of soap and disinfectants from a private sector partner, Unilever, and in-kind donations of hand sanitizer and reusable sanitary clothes from the private sector in the Republic of Korea.

Contact: Marie-Claude Poirier, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Pakistan, poirier@unhcr.org; **Faisal Azam Khan**, Associate Reporting Officer, UNHCR Pakistan, khanfais@unhcr.org