

Pakistan

30 May – 15 June 2020

Overview

- The number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan has risen sharply, more than doubling in two weeks. As of 15 June, the total number of cases reached 144,478, with 2,729 deaths being recorded.¹ Pakistan averaged over 5,000 daily new cases. Fifteen refugees tested positive and sadly, four have died.
- Despite the worsening situation, Pakistan has eased lockdown restrictions. Essential businesses have been allowed to operate seven days a week, while non-essential businesses operate five days a week. The Government has asked the population to strictly observe the COVID-19 prevention guidelines and standard operating procedures. Provincial governments are enforcing the mandatory use of face masks through a “no mask, no services” campaign. Domestic flights have resumed, and international carriers are gradually resuming operations. Educational institutions remained closed.
- In a letter to the Government, WHO indicated that the general public in Pakistan is not practicing physical distancing and frequent handwashing. WHO further advised the Government to follow a policy of intermittent lockdown such as “two weeks off, two weeks on” to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19.
- The Foreign Minister, Mr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, asked for greater support from the international community to meet the needs of Afghans in Pakistan. During an international webinar on the “Situation of Refugees and Other Displaced Persons during the Pandemic: The Need for International Cooperation” on 9 June, he said that the presence of 3 million Afghans in Pakistan was a clear illustration of the country’s hospitality. He highlighted that while UNHCR is providing assistance to Afghan refugees, the needs of undocumented and other documented Afghans residing in Pakistan were not being met, irrespective of whose mandate they fall under.
- The Government’s *Ehsaas* emergency cash assistance programme has now reached over 10 million Pakistani families, expending nearly Rs.123 billion (approximately \$760 million). Families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to help meet their most urgent needs for four months.

Operational highlights

Social protection

- UNHCR’s emergency cash assistance is fully under way across the country in partnership with the Government and Pakistan Post. The emergency cash support 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.
- Together with the Government, UNHCR is co-chairing the Protection Sector Working Group at the federal and provincial levels. UNHCR participates in other sector working groups to help ensure that refugees are included in the respective response plans. For example, an agreement was reached with the provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure that Afghan refugees have access to government-managed nutrition stabilization centres close to refugee villages. In order to raise awareness of the importance of nutrition, the district authorities will distribute nutrition information materials to refugee villages.



During a ceremony held in Quetta, Balochistan, Afghan refugee, Muhammad Din, received UNHCR’s emergency cash assistance. Muhammad suffers from a serious medical condition. Photo credit © UNHCR/H. Karim

¹ For the latest official statistics on COVID-19, please visit the Government of Pakistan’s portal: <http://covid.gov.pk/stats/pakistan>.

Communicating with communities

- UNHCR and partners continued to engage with refugees through various channels, such as WhatsApp groups, telephone calls and small group meetings. During the past weeks, UNHCR staff visited refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Punjab. They met with community representatives, outreach volunteers, NGO partners and government counterparts. Messages on COVID-19 were disseminated, and communities were reassured of UNHCR's continued support.
- In addition, UNHCR assessed the emerging needs and the situation on the ground. Staff remained in contact with refugees in urban and scattered clusters through community elders. Telephone calls were made from Advice and Legal Aid Centres. Communities were advised to adhere to the instructions from the local and provincial administrations. The community elders were also given the opportunity to convey their concerns, which were mostly related to the loss of livelihoods and the uncertain future. Community health workers also continued to conduct health sessions in small groups on COVID-19 prevention and referrals.

Health

- Public health facilities were under massive pressure due to COVID-19. Some of the usual health services were suspended or reduced to help stop the spread of COVID-19. In order to ensure the continued delivery of health services in refugee villages, UNHCR is planning for a mobile health service to cover refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. UNHCR has consulted relevant government counterparts, and preparations have reached their final stage.
- UNHCR was in the process of distributing a new batch of personal protective equipment (PPEs) to refugee leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These PPEs will be provided to refugee Outreach Volunteers and refugee community members, especially street food vendors as they are more exposed to COVID-19. Outreach Volunteers are expected to use PPEs during awareness sessions to minimize the risk of contracting the virus.



UNHCR's partner held a capacity-building training to help mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on refugee women. Photo credit © UNHCR/A. Hassnain

WASH

- The reconstruction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in 21 Mother and Child Health Centers in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was initiated. Activities include the repair of toilets, hand-washing areas and water systems. Incinerators and waste bins will also be provided. Further assessment to determine the needs of refugees in another 20 refugee villages is under way.

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 15 June 2020, UNHCR had received \$252 million, or 34 per cent of the requirements.

In Pakistan, UNHCR's requirements amount to \$20.6 million. Since the launch of the appeal, UNHCR in Pakistan has received generous contributions of \$2.4 million from the Government of the United States of America and \$1 million from the Government of Japan. UNHCR 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:

