

Pakistan

18 April-1 May 2020

Overview

- The number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan continued to grow. The total number rose to more than 16,800 on 1 May 2020, with 385 deaths.¹ Three registered Afghan refugees have died, while another three have tested positive for COVID-19. Government authorities apply the same measures when individuals test positive for COVID-19, regardless of nationality or status.
- The partial lockdown was extended until 9 May 2020 and the suspension of international flights will also remain in place until mid-May. At the start of the holy month of Ramadan, the Government and religious parties agreed to a 20-point agenda to keep mosques open with precautionary measures.
- On 23 April 2020, the Government launched the Pakistan's Preparedness and Response Plan (PPRP) concerning the medical component (response plan) for the pandemic. The initial nine-month Plan, requiring \$595 million, was endorsed by the UN, international financial institutions and donors. Pakistan will scale up its emergency response, improve awareness-raising, expand surveillance and deliver essential medical equipment to health facilities, among other measures.
- Pakistan previously announced an \$8 billion relief package to respond to the impact of COVID-19. The Government's BISP/Ehsaas emergency cash assistance programme has reached some 5.9 million of the most needy Pakistani families, expending Rs.72 billion (approximately \$460 million). Families received Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to help meet their most urgent needs for four months.

Operational highlights

UNHCR continued its support the Government's response and advocated the inclusion of refugees, whenever possible. UNHCR worked in close cooperation with sister UN agencies, and UNHCR is a member of Pakistan's UN Crisis Management Team. Meanwhile, UNHCR's core programmes are impacted but continue while abiding by the Government's measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Health

- UNHCR is continuing the procurement of medical supplies, including surgical masks, gloves, gowns and infrared thermometers, which are intended for front-line medical and partner staff working in health facilities in the refugee villages and communities across Pakistan. Due to the global demand and subsequent delays in international procurement, UNHCR is also acquiring some of the materials from the national market.
- UNHCR donated medical equipment to the Children Hospital Quetta as part of its ongoing work to support provincial Governments and improve public health care services. The equipment valued at Rs.7 million (approximately \$45,000) included a fully automated chemistry analyzer. With this new instrument, the hospital will offer free biochemical testing to the most needy Pakistanis and Afghans.



UNHCR partner staff and volunteers assemble hygiene kits before their distribution to needy Afghan refugee families in refugee villages in Balochistan. © Taraqee Foundation

WASH

- With the support of a partner and refugee Outreach Volunteers, UNHCR completed the distribution of hygiene kits on 19 April 2020. The kits were provided to nearly 4,800 vulnerable Afghan refugee families in the 10 refugee villages in Balochistan. The kits, which comprised one soap and three

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

sanitary clothes per kit, were assembled in a local warehouse in Quetta. Lack of public transportation proved challenging for partner staff and their volunteers when accessing some of the more remote refugee villages.

Communicating with communities

- UNHCR has established an extensive network of 3,000 refugee Outreach Volunteers and community mobilizers, who help amplify important health and hygiene messages from the Government of Pakistan on COVID-19 prevention and response in refugee communities. UNHCR continued to reach out to them in several ways. Prior to the government restrictions on movement, focus group discussions, individual counselling and interviews with refugees were common practice. Now, UNHCR prioritizes the use of digital communication to disseminate information while following the Government's directives on physical distancing.



In refugee villages in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, UNHCR field staff continued to raise awareness of the coronavirus among health partners and refugees, including elders. © UNHCR/J. Khalid

Protection, including cash-based interventions

- UNHCR is working to finalize contractual arrangements with the Pakistan Post Office. This will allow them to disburse Urgent Money Orders to the most vulnerable refugee families jointly identified by UNHCR and the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions/Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees. Afghan elders, *shura* leaders, refugee Outreach Volunteers and partner staff all provided crucial support in this regard. The UNHCR cash programme will mirror the Government's BISP/Ehsaas emergency cash programme, where vulnerable families are receiving Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) covering a four-month period. If funds are secured, the programme may be expanded to assist over 100,000 vulnerable households.
- UNHCR, together with partners, continued support to refugees identified as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. UNHCR's helplines operate seven days, 24-hours a day. Due to restrictions on movement, UNHCR carried out remote case management and offered psychosocial support and referrals with the survivor's consent.

Funding needs

The funding requirements indicated in the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 amount to approximately \$2 billion. Currently, UNHCR is globally seeking \$255 million for the next nine months. As of 1 May 2020, UNHCR had received \$225 million, or 88 per cent of the requirements.

Since the appeal's launch, UNHCR has received the generous contribution of \$2.4 million from the Government of the United States of America and \$1 million from the Government of Japan. UNHCR is immensely grateful for their swift support of the COVID-19 response.

At this time, the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan revision is ongoing. The revised appeal is expected to be launched on 7 May 2020. In the next iteration, Pakistan will be included, and steps have been taken to establish a Humanitarian Response Plan for Pakistan and re-activate the pooled funding mechanism. UNHCR has ensured the inclusion of refugees in all sectors and is leading the Protection Sector.

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USD 255M

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

