

PAKISTAN COVID-19 EMERGENCY CASH ASSISTANCE UPDATE



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The Head of UNHCR's Sub-Office in Peshawar, Mr. Bernard Inkoom, handing over UNHCR cash assistance to refugees in Chamakani, Peshawar on the first day of cash distribution programme in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Mr. Inkoom was accompanied by staff from the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, the Afghan Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation, and the Pakistan Post Office on the occasion.

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on UNHCR's persons of concern in Pakistan. In particular, the economic impact of COVID-19 has presented urgent challenges for refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom lost their daily-wage earning jobs due to Government-enforced lockdowns and movement restrictions.

In line with a Government of Pakistan programme for vulnerable Pakistani citizens, UNHCR and Government partners, including the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON)/Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR), joined together to provide emergency cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Identified refugee households who are facing significant vulnerabilities or have lost income due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive a one-time emergency cash assistance of 12,000 Pakistani Rupees (approximately \$77 USD). Cash assistance is being distributed in 55 districts and 53 refugee villages across Pakistan through an innovative partnership with the Pakistan Post Office. The project has received generous funding from Japan, the United States of America and the European Union (Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development – DEVCO).

Cash assistance empowers asylum-seekers and refugees who can now choose how to cover their basic needs during the COVID-19 situation. It also

32,835

Number of families assisted ¹

197,010

Number of individuals assisted ¹

2.4M\$

Cash distributed (US Dollar) ¹

contributes directly to the economy of Pakistan by allowing refugees to purchase goods and services.

Between May and August 2020, 32,835 households comprised of approximately 197,010 refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from the emergency cash programme in Pakistan in 55 districts and 53 refugee villages

COVID-19 Emergency Cash Assistance Process

Community Outreach: UNHCR and partners conduct outreach, both virtually and in small group sessions, maintaining social distancing, to inform known refugee community leaders of the cash assistance programme and vulnerability criteria. In total, over 1,000 community leaders are taking part in the cash assistance programme in refugee villages and urban settlements throughout the country.

Data Collection: Community leaders conduct profiling within their localities to identify community members who fall under the standardized vulnerability criteria. This information is submitted to UNHCR on data collection tools through WhatsApp or in hard copy.

Data Entry and Data Cleaning: UNHCR and partner staff review the data collection tools and enter the information collected into a database through KOBO. The data received then goes through a cleaning process, which includes a comparison to known databases and the removal of duplicate entries.

Verification: UNHCR and partner staff conduct random verification interviews for 10 per cent of each leaders' list of beneficiaries to confirm that each beneficiary qualifies for assistance based on the vulnerability criteria.

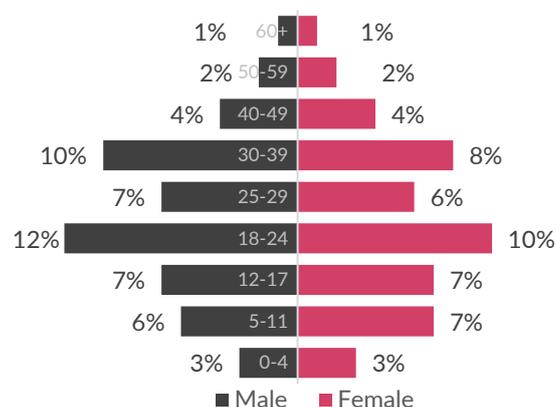
Distribution: The finalized list of beneficiaries is shared with the Pakistan Post who prints Urgent Money Orders (UMOs) that are dispatched to local Post Offices across the country. Refugee beneficiaries receive an SMS alerting them that their assistance is ready for collection. From the date the UMOs are issued, refugees have one month to collect their assistance. Refugees must approach the assigned Post Office in person with their original identify documentation.

Post-Distribution Monitoring: UNHCR and partners conduct regular post distribution monitoring to identify challenges and protection issues facing refugees as part of the distribution. Any emerging issues are managed through coordination with the Post Office, community leadership and partners.

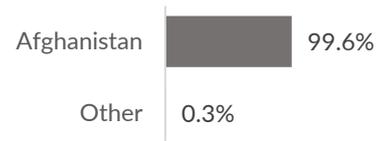
Demographics of refugees and asylum seekers assisted with cash

Since May 2020, approximately 32,835 families have received cash assistance in Pakistan. In August alone, 4,290 households composed of a total of 25,740 individuals benefited from the cash assistance programme.

The number of refugees and asylum-seekers receiving cash assistance between May and August 2020 has remained relatively consistent, fluctuating by only 5,500 during these four months.

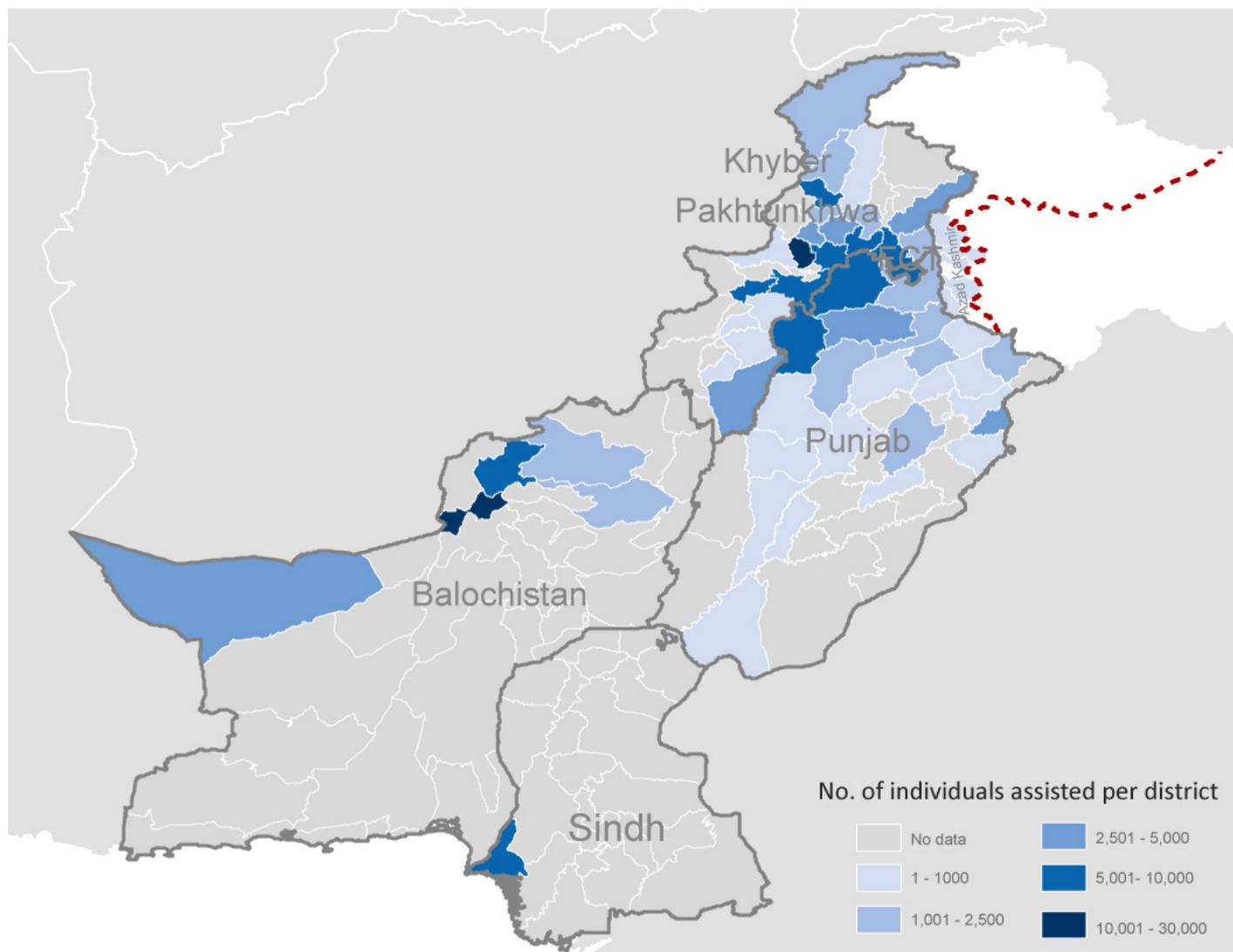


Some 99.6 per cent of individuals in the cash assistance scheme are from Afghanistan, and 0.3 per cent (non-Afghans) from Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.



Location of individuals receiving cash assistance

Asylum-seekers and refugees receiving cash assistance reside in 55 districts in Pakistan. Approximately 59.8 per cent of those receiving cash assistance are located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 22.3 per cent in Balochistan, 11.5 per cent in Punjab and 6.4 per cent in Sindh, the Islamabad Capital Territory and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir.



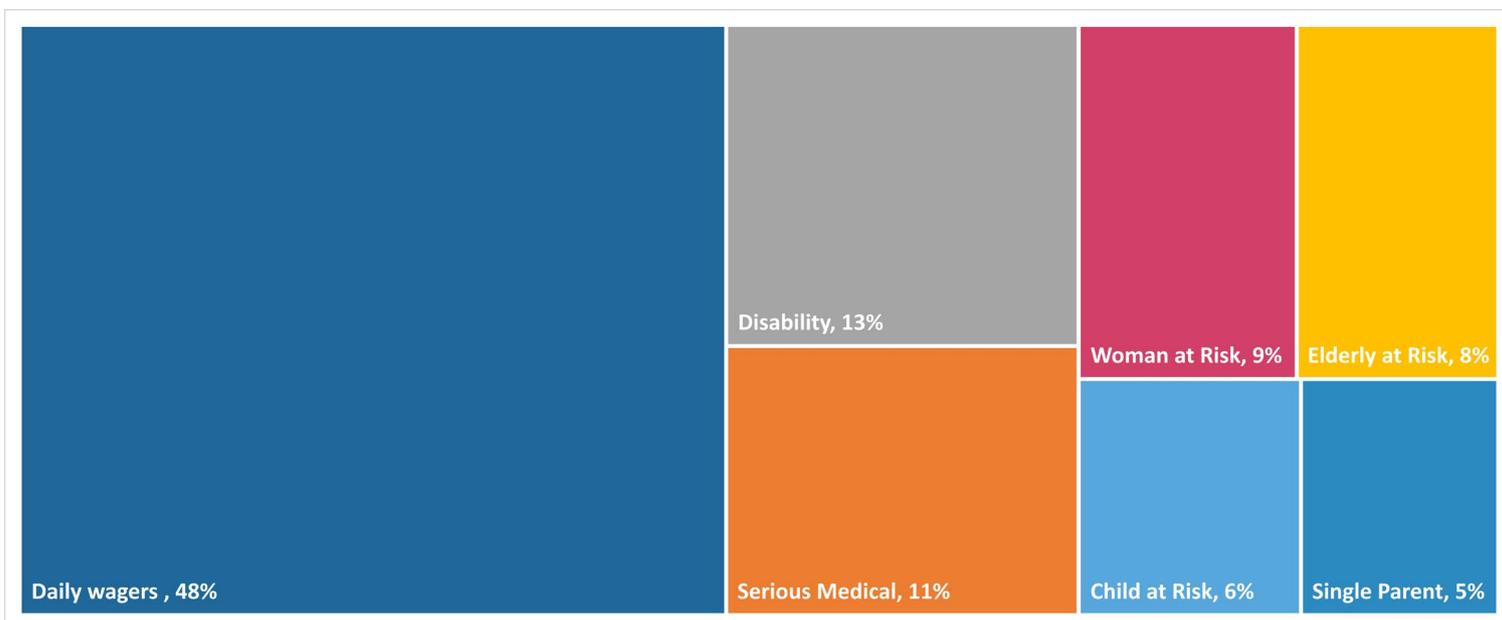
Vulnerable individuals receiving cash assistance

Together with the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, UNHCR established standardized vulnerability criteria for the exercise, which closely resembled the criteria utilized for the Government of Pakistan's assistance programme. The criteria sought to identify both vulnerable groups of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as those who have faced severe economic hardship, as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns. Some of the vulnerability criteria included the following:

- Refugees living with physical or mental disabilities that impede on their independent functioning;
- Unaccompanied, separated or otherwise vulnerable children living without family support;

- Women living without effective male protection, including widows and other women at risk;
- Elderly refugees living without family support;
- Refugees living with severe medical conditions;
- Single parents caring for children without family support;
- Daily wage laborers who have lost their income due to COVID-19 lockdowns and who have large families (4+ children) to care for.

In total, around half of the total identified beneficiaries were daily wage laborers who lost their jobs, while the remaining were those with other vulnerabilities. The vulnerability profiling exercise for cash assistance has also provided UNHCR with stronger data on refugees living with vulnerabilities in Pakistan. This information will be used to inform future protection interventions.



Testimony

Muhammad Jan* is a 65-year-old man living in Karachi, Sindh. For several years, he has been suffering from cardiac disease. He has nine children under the age of 18. His eldest sons lost their part-time jobs during the lockdowns, and the family struggled to make ends meet. Muhammad Jan remembers that it became harder to provide food for his family. He was very glad and thankful to UNHCR for initiating the cash assistance programme. He said that the cash assistance meant a lot to him in this situation and allowed his family to buy food and medicine and pay rent during the most difficult time. One of his sons has recently found a new job, and the family is hopeful once again. (*Name has been changed.)

