

Pakistan

October 2020

Overview

There has been a steady increase in COVID-19 cases across Pakistan during the month of October. The country's apex body on COVID-19, the National Command and Control Centre (NCOC), warned of a second wave of COVID-19 as the daily average of cases crossed the threshold of 1,000 cases per day on 30 October. The Government has asked the public to follow physical distancing and avoid unnecessary gatherings. Further measures to put restrictions on public gatherings are also being considered. The total number of cases as of 31 October was 332,993, with 6,806 deaths. Out of the total 12,121 active cases, 838 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 were hospitalized, out of whom 669 were in critical condition. Some 11,283 COVID-19 positive cases are also in isolation facilities or self-isolating at home. No new cases of COVID-19 have been reported among refugee population.



COVID-19 protocol is observed as regular activities resume. An Afghan refugee is washing his hands in the waiting area of Voluntary Repatriation Centre in Baleli, Balochistan. © UNHCR/B. Shahzada

UNHCR is strictly adhering to standard operating procedures for COVID-19 while carrying out its activities. Voluntary returns to Afghanistan from the Voluntary Repatriation Centres in Azakhel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Baleli, Balochistan has been extended until the end of 2020. Refugees are receiving documentation services from the Proof of Registration (PoR) Card Modification Centres, while the Advice and Legal Aid Centres are providing refugees with legal assistance as needed.

Social Protection

Cash distribution to the most vulnerable refugee families continued during October. So far, more than 40,000 families have received this assistance which mirrors the Government's Ehsaas emergency cash programme, where vulnerable families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to cover a four-month period. Cash assistance is disbursed in 55 districts and 54 refugee villages across Pakistan through an innovative partnership with the Pakistan Post.

40,000 vulnerable refugee families have so far received emergency cash assistance.



An Afghan refugee receiving cash assistance from UNHCR Head of Sub-Office in Peshawar. © UNHCR/ Z. Saleah

Communication with Communities

As the Government warned of a second wave of the pandemic, UNHCR stepped up its awareness-raising activities to sensitize refugees on COVID-19 prevention measures. In this regard, UNHCR and partners

continued to organize small meetings with community and *shuras* members and WASH and school management committees.

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



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The repair and rehabilitation work of WASH facilities is ongoing in Mother and Child Health Centres and schools in refugee villages. The rehabilitation of WASH facilities in four additional health facilities was completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in October. Work is in progress in 24 Mother and Child Health Centres. Important messages on COVID-19 and general health and hygiene were also imparted through WASH management committees.

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



UNHCR staff visit a Mother and Child Health Centre in Naguman refugee village to assess the situation and provide support to the health staff. © UNHCR

Health

UNHCR continued to procure and distribute personal protection equipment (PPE) items such as respiratory and surgical masks, gloves, gowns, infrared thermometers and hand sanitizers. UNHCR and partners regularly visited refugee village health facilities to engage the health staff on COVID-19 related messages and gauge the health and WASH related needs. The operation of mobile health units continued in refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

So far, more than 530,000 masks, 841,000 gloves and 4,000 gowns have been distributed.



A UNHCR partner staff member in Gamkol refugee village describes COVID-19 prevention measures. © UNHCR/M. Arif

Funding

Reflected within the revised UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, UNHCR's global appeal amounts to \$745 million. UNHCR has so far received \$468 million, or 63 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, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as from the European Union. UNHCR has also received in-kind donations of soap and disinfectants from the private sector partner, Unilever, and in-kind donations of hand sanitizer and reusable sanitary clothes from private sector donors from the Republic of Korea.

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