

Pakistan

December 2020

Overview

Pakistan experienced a second surge in the pandemic and a spike in COVID-19 cases during December, however the number of cases started to decrease towards the end of the month. The total number of confirmed cases since the beginning of the outbreak stood at 482,178 with 10,176 deaths as of 31 December. Case fatality rate was 2.11 per cent. The Government's decision to close education insitutions and ban all public gatherings may have resulted in slowing the spread of the virus. Pakistan will receive the first doses of a vaccine in late January 2021 and continues to negotiate with different companies to acquire a sustainable supply.



Head of UNHCR in Peshawar visited Akora refugee village in Nowshera. Such visits reassure refugees of UNHCR's continued support and serve as an important forum where they can share their concerns and issues with UNHCR. ©UNHCR/Z. Saleah

UNHCR's regular activities continued to take place while adhering to Standard Operating Procedures for COVID-19. Most of the planned COVID-19 activities have been completed while some construction and WASH-related activities are in the last stage of completion.

Social Protection

UNHCR concluded cash distribution to the most vulnerable refugee families in December. While the final figures are being compiled, at least 72,000 families received assistance which mirrored the Government's *Ehsaas* emergency cash programme, where vulnerable families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to cover a 4-month period. Cash assistance was disbursed in 55 districts across Pakistan through an innovative partnership with the Pakistan Post. UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, carried out a post-distribution assessment. Initial results show that the cash-based initiative achieved the objective of meeting the most urgent needs of vulnerable refugee families during the COVID-19 pandemic.



An Afghan refugee is receiving cash assistance at the Government Post Office Islamabad. UNHCR's cash-based assistance programme helped the most vulnerable Afghan refugee families who were impacted by the COVID-19 situaiton. ©UNHCR/A. Shahzad

Over 72,000 vulnerable refugee families received emergency cash assistance.

Communication with Communities

UNHCR staff and Partner teams continued to reach out to refugee communities through face-to-face meetings and social media. During the month, Outreach Volunteers, community elders, WASH committee members and community health workers conducted awareness sessions with refugee women and men participants on the prevention of COVID-19, acute and chronic diseases including acute respiratory infections and referrals. Similarly, as part of the community engagement, meetings were conducted by field staff with the Shura and religious leaders (who continued delivering messages on the prevention of COVID-19 from mosques).

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)

Most of the COVID-19 related activities have been completed while a few are ongoing. Water and sanitation activities, including construction or renovation of toilets and washing areas were completed in 66 schools. Some 100 handpumps and 23 water supply schemes were completed in refugee villages and urban settlements. WASH activities in 54 Mother and Child Health centers were completed which included construction or repair of toilets and washing areas. Other activities included distribution of soap, hygiene kits, and sanitary clothes and awareness sessions with refugee communities.

255 water, sanitation and hygiene projects were completed by UNHCR and partners in the COVID-19 response.



Health

In order to help Partners and health staff combat COVID-19 in the health facilities, UNHCR distributed personal protective equipment such as body gowns, surgical and respiratory masks, gloves and infrared thermometers. Most of the distributions have been completed. UNHCR teams continued to visit Mother and Child Health centers in different districts and discussed health issues with health committees and refugee shuras.

Over 530,000 masks, 841,000 gloves and 4,000 gowns were distributed.

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 \$477 million, or 64 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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Apart from awareness sessions on health and hygiene, refugee women also receive hygiene kits to promote healthy habits among refugee communities. A refugee woman is receiving hygiene kit in Chaghi refugee village in Balochistan. © UNHCR/H Karim



A UNHCR team, accompanied by Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees officials visited the Mother and Child Health centre in refugee village Oblan. They observed that the newly-installed WASH facilities at the centre and also met with the . ©UNHCR/M. Arif