

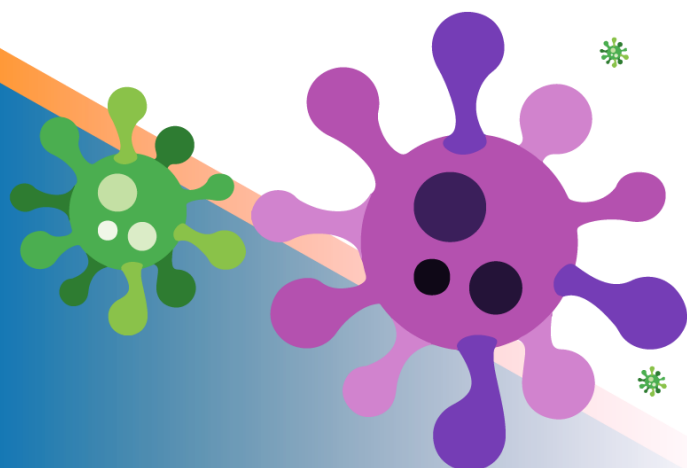


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LOCAL COUNCILS ASSOCIATION
OF THE PUNJAB

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

&

LOCAL COUNCILS
ASSOCIATIONS OF

PAKISTAN

A REPORT



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COVID-19 RESPONSE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COUNCILS ASSOCIATIONS PAKISTAN

1. Factsheet

The novel coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China at the end of last year and spread in almost the whole world within a couple of months. It is not the virulence or fatality, but the infectivity of the new virus – also known as SARS-CoV-2 – that has set off a global frenzy.

Pakistan, despite its close proximity with China, remained coronavirus-free until February 26 when a young man from Karachi tested positive after returning from Iran – one of the most affected countries at that time. After a brief hiatus following the first case, Covid-19 cases began to significantly increase as more pilgrims returning from Iran tested positive.¹

1.1. Current Situation

Sindh is leading with COVID-19 cases number in Pakistan with 17,241 cases till 20th of May 2020. Punjab is at the second with 15,976. Until now Pakistan faced 939 deaths out of this contagion whilst 36 of them died in the last 24 hours. KP is with 6230 and Baluchistan has the lowest number with 2820 cases of COVID-19 cases till date.

On the 9th of May, more than 2000 cases were reported in Pakistan, this spike considering the highest in recent month. Pakistan is now in the top ten countries who are reporting the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

For more information [click here](#).

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2205677/1-live-chinese-company-approaches-pakistan-vaccine-trials-nationwide-tally-jumps-11155/>

The primary amplification among cases of Coronavirus is due to voiding precautions and instructions from the Government.

On 19th of May 2020, the Government of Pakistan issued permission to open businesses except for food courts, cinemas and play areas with revised SOPs stipulated with previously imposed instructions.

But, Baluchistan is still holding [lockdown status](#) for till 2nd of June.

2. The Local Government Response

2.1. *Administration of the Covid-19 response*

Across the country, the different levels of governments in Pakistan have instigated federal, provincial and local responses to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic depending on their respective jurisdiction. Local government departments in the four provinces have been responsible for the implementation of many activities to help stop the spread of the virus through different means, based on local conditions. Local Government and Community Development department Punjab (LG & CD), Local Government & Rural Development KPK and Local Government department of Baluchistan are working as the front line departments of the provincial government to restrain the spread of the virus. On the other hand, in Sindh, the response is more coordinated as the elected local government are taking different measures not to just restrain the spread of the virus but also take care of the vulnerable who are economically affected at the grassroots.

Different approaches have been used in different provinces due to political, social and most importantly economic situations. In Punjab, the Local government & community development (LG&CD) wanted to implement the provincial SOPs at the local level without any consultation with a local representative and enforced partial lockdown throughout the province. In Sindh however, the local government has been a key partner in assessing the situation at the local level and enforcing lockdown in the hardest-hit towns of the province. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Local Government Department is the face of the Provincial Government's response against Covid-19. All field staff of Local government & rural

development (LG&RD) are working in the province including the newly merged areas of FATA to constraint the spread of the virus.

Here are some of the significant actions taken to-date across the country by the LG departments, elected representatives of local government and former elected representatives.

2.2. Communication and Awareness Raising

Modern and traditional mediums of communication have been used to enhance engagement with different stakeholders and convey messages to the public. These have included televised daily government media briefings, to the engagement of local mosques to reach those with no access to the internet or social media.

Local government departments have established a helpline for information about Covid-19. The helplines also provide specific information for people with symptoms what measure to take to avoid spreading the virus. LG&RD KP engaged Imams (religious person who leads the prayer) of the local mosques in creating awareness about social distancing and staying at home in the lockdown. All LG departments in the four provinces using a

different medium of communication according to local needs and environment. LG & CD Punjab used auto-rickshaw carrying messages 'stay home stay safe'. Sindh Local Government Minister have started an awareness message campaign through Social Media.



Figure 1: Awareness Video Campaign from LG department Sindh



Figure 2: Riksha Awareness Campaign in Punjab

In local languages. Local Government Sindh issued an awareness-raising video informing people about the pandemic and how to protect themselves. The awareness videos is an Urdu song, which urges the people to support each other in these hard times, keep the social distance for the time being and stay at home as much possible to stop the spread the Covid-19 virus. The video is trying to spread optimism among in public². In

addition, all local council in each province has dedicated web pages and social media platforms to provide information to the public.

2.3. Health Protection

Health is the federal and provincial jurisdiction in Pakistan³ and LG playing an indirect role in health protection. LG is responsible for the collection of household waste and enhanced sanitization of public spaces across the country (but primarily in urban areas)



Figure 3: LGs of PK are playing indirect role in health protection through waste management and enhancement of sanitization.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJydUZLSKQU&feature=youtu.be>

³ <https://hospital-medical-management.imedpub.com/comparison-and-analysis-of-health-care-delivery-systems-pakistan-versus-bangladesh.php?aid=18097>

Increased sanitization across the provinces, in fact, the biggest cleanliness drive in the history of the country has undertaken by the provincial local government departments. Such as the disinfection spray in local areas of Baluchistan.



Figure 4: Disinfection Spray in local areas of Baluchistan

of Sindh provides 1 million soap bar for people to wash their hands. The union councils are authorized to purchase up to Rs 100,000 soap bars for distribution to the people of that union council.



Figure 5: Donation of Corona testing kits in Kasur, Punjab

The local government departments sat up special corona helpline to information and advice those who have corona symptoms. The Sindh local government department in collaboration with the health department has established the first drive-through Corona testing center, which provides testing facilities for local people on nominal charges. Furthermore, a mobile X-ray facility has also been established at the testing centre for the necessary clinical examination of the suspected patients of coronavirus. The local government department

Ex-chairman District Kasur (Punjab province) donated 200 kits for Corona testing to District Head Quarter Hospital Kasur. He is also raising awareness in his constituency on how to effectively respond to COVID 19. He is running a campaign and mobilizing the wealthy households to identify at least one poor household and provide them with sufficient food.

The local government with the technical support of UNICEF and UNDP has launched counselling and psychosocial support for the public especially for the people who are in

isolation or quarantine and under depression or any other psychological complication during the Covid-19 outbreak⁴.

Mr Amir Ali Shah, member LCA-Sindh installed disinfection doors at local health centre Bahria, National Database Authority (NADRA) and Ehsas Kafalat Programme. These are one of the busiest areas



Figure 6: LCA Sindh member installed disinfection doors at NADRA and Ehsas Kafalat Programme entrances

and the disinfection doors would help stop the spread of the virus.

President LCA-Sindh Mr Kumail Hyder Shah arranged volunteer teams who went door to door in Sukkur and Rohri to distribute safety kits and raise awareness about the COVID-19 virus.

Ashraf Bijarani, Chairman Town Committee, Kashmore and member executive committee of LCAS arranged for disinfection spray as a preventive measure in 720 households in district Kashmore. The local government Sindh provided some of the funds but we also fundraised on our own to bring professional technicians for disinfection spraying in the households and neighbourhoods.

⁴ <http://lgdsindh.gov.pk/>



Figure 7: Chairman town committee & member LCA Sindh distributed masks and soaps to 2000 houses while arranging mental health care experts for isolated patients.

Ameer Ali Shah Chairman town committee Bhiria and members LCA-Sindh sent psychological experts to provide counselling to people facing mental health challenges while living in self-isolation or at quarantine centres in Bhiria - Nousharo Feroze as a relief activity. He also distributed masks and soaps to more than 2000 houses. He arranged all the volunteers to distribute it at the doorstep of Bhiria - Nousharo Feroze.

Dilroz Khan Ex Nazim district Tor Ghar and LCA-KP BoG member conducted awareness campaign regarding educating people about social distancing and information on COVID 19 and urged them to stay at homes.

Asif Alijah, ex district council member and Executive committee member of LCAKP organized awareness-raising sessions in 48 villages and 1500 households sensitize about precautionary measures about COVID 19. They have also hired a local textile worker to prepare 2000 masks and distributed in the local communities.

2.4. Socio-economic Welfare

The federal government launched a special funding scheme for poor and daily wagers who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund will provide eligible recipients with Rs 12,000 /month during the lockdown in the country. While the national government funding package is extensive, it still cannot reach all those in need across the country, as such local government departments and representatives are working on both departmental and personal capacities to supplement this support and provide basic day-to-day relief in the communities. They have also established partnerships with charities, donor agencies and private funders.

Some examples of actions at the community level include: Farzana Abbas, former Municipal Corporation Sahiwal, Ome-Kulsom former MC member from Muzaffargarh, councilor and member LCAP worked to raise awareness in District Sahiwal on health protection and how to stop the



Figure 8: Food & vegetables at low price in market by LCA Punjab members

spread of the virus. She is also collaborating with local charity organizations, contact the affluent people of the area to help the less fortunate with food and other assistance, and has to lead the way distributing food items and rations in a personal capacity in the area.

Ex. UC councilors - member LCAP from Lahore Rabeya Zahid and Zarina Shiekh from Jhang have been supporting vegetable markets in Lahore to provide food items at reasonable prices for needy households, as well as arranging regular ration distribution in the local area.

Jameel Ahmad Kals, Ex-Chairman Kasure, distributed food items in the local poor Christians communities.

Gulshan Bibi former district council and LCAKP member working in her local area to raise awareness on Covid-19 and oversee social distancing are maintained at all times. She has also been working to mobilize people in her local community to donate and distribute food items and surgical masks to local people who need them.

Dilroze Ex District Nazim distributed ration among families who are affected by lockdown. He mobilized ex-local government members for fundraising and raised enough funds to buy ration and food items for 200 families. They also distributed surgical masks and hand sanitizers among the residents.

Fasih Ullah Khan Ex District Nazim Dir and member LCA-KP Executive committee have advised the locals to register with secretary village council so that they can get the relief package

donated by the wealthy people of the district. For this purpose, district Nazim Dir Upper distributed ration among 300 family's mostly daily wagers who are mostly affected by the lockdown. Ration bags including items of day-to-day use were distributed in a sports ground, keeping protocols of social distancing in upper Dir and tor ghar.

Nusrat Ara former district councillor Mardan and LCA-KP executive committee member and with the support of other ex-district councillors distributed 15 days ration among 150 Families (women) in district Mardan. She made a team of 60 females and conducted awareness session by visiting different union councils. Miss Ara is looking forward to distributing ration and sanitizers among 250 families before 'Eid (end of May) in the district and looking forward to providing relief package to more families in coming days with the support of ex-local government members of Mardan.



Figure 9: LCA-KP executive committee member and ex-district councillors 15 days ration in Mardan villages



Figure 10: EC member LCA KP distributed 1000 flour bags in far flung areas of Beer on Govt controlled rates

Asif Alijah, ex district council member and Executive committee member of LCAKP distributed 1000 flour bags among poor and deserving families in far-flung and hilly areas of U.C Beer on government-controlled rates. They have also distributed beverages to poor people.

Kumail Hyder Shah District councillor Rohri-Sukkhra and president Local Council Association

Sindh has distributed relief package and ration to 41,000 families in districts Rohri / Sukkur and its adjacent areas.

Ameer Ali Shah Town Committee Chairman Bahria and General Secretary Local Council Association Sindh has distributed ration and food items among disadvantaged communities, especially those on daily wages-the hard hit economically.

Aslam Aslam Sheikh District chairman Sukkhra Member executive committee of LCAS arranged funds for ration distribution from affluent friends/family and distributed the day-to-day use of food items in upper the less fortunate local communities.

Abid Hussain Lehri former district councillor and president of LCAB has arranged ration for poor people in this local area. Similarly, Ms Nigah Naz and Mr Aslam Rind District Councilors and LCAB executive committee members distributed relief package among daily wagers.

3. Open Spaces and Business Regulations

Municipal corporations staff carry out inspections of public spaces and disinfect the areas thoroughly in areas where essential business are still open. The federal and provincial government have closed all non-essential business across the four provinces. The local government departments working with other line department and police to ensure the non-essential business are closed and remain closed for the length of the lockdown.

Local government is also playing an important role in raising awareness of the importance of social distancing. In addition both local councils and the provincial local governments, in

partnership with the police force and working to enforce the social distancing regulations in essential business places and other public areas which remain open.

4. Economic – Trade and Industry

Essential business and industries are allowed to operate across the country (Food shops, hospitals etc.) while all non-essential businesses are closed. The government imposed section 144 on 15 March for a month. According to this notification: There is a ban on sit-ins and procession, rallies at public places, markets and hotels/restaurants and on wedding parties, sports gathering, cinemas, educational gatherings, conferences and seminars⁵.

The government of Pakistan, however, has approved the fiscal stimulus package of Rs. 1200 billion and Supplementary Grant of Rs. 100 billion for the "Residual/Emergency Relief Fund" in relation to the provision of funds for mitigating the effect of COVID-19 for the impacted population⁶. Some of the measures the government has taken are listed below;

- The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved the deferment of monthly and quarterly fuel adjustments in the electricity bills for power consumers for the next three months (until June 2020) under the government relief package.
- Power Division has reportedly prepared power tariff freezing for three months aimed at minimising the financial burden on the Coronavirus-hit consumers, estimated financial impact of which will be Rs 381 billion.
- The Government announced a special incentive package for the construction industry.
- Complete amnesty has been proposed and no questions will be asked about the source of investment made until 30 June 2022.
- The chief commissioner of Islamabad Capital Territory banned the layoff of all kinds of workers in the region during the current coronavirus-induced lockdown and said all those workers would be paid salaries, remunerations and wages in full by their respective employers during the period.

⁵ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/576713/coronavirus-section-144-imposed-in-pakistan-for-one-month/>

⁶ <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/pakistan-government-and-institution-measures-in-response-to-covid.html>

- Rs. 200 billion of cash assistance for the daily wagers working in the formal industrial sector and who had been laid off because of COVID-19 outbreak.
- Rs. 50 billion for Utility Stores Corporation to provide essential food items to the vulnerable section of the society at subsidized rates.
- The supplementary grant of Rs. 30 billion to Ministry of Commerce to payback duty drawbacks to textile exporters in the current financial year to improve their liquidity position

4.1. Housing

The provincial and local governments have the provision of housing for isolation and quarantine persons, where they provide necessities free of charge. The government also announced flexibilities in terms of payment of utility bills for private households and small business. They would have the choice to either pay the utility bills in easy instalments or can differ it fully for a year. The local government department provided a temporary facility of shelter for homeless people in government buildings and sports complexes where they are providing free food.

5. Travel and Movement Restrictions

5.1. International Restrictions

Like many countries of the world significant travel restrictions put in place in Pakistan. Airports and other entry points to the country have been closed for regional and international travel.

5.2. Internal Movement Restrictions

- 24-hour Lockdown has declared across the country. Only essential services allowed operating and people can only leave homes for essential business, buying food, going to doctor etc. across the country.
- All domestic flights are suspended until 7 May, to be reviewed afterword. Train and inter-city local transport shut down.

- Congregation prayers in mosques banned but not eased with social distancing to be followed.
- Section 144 is imposed in most parts of the country, which restricts movement within districts, until 9 May 2020.
- Lockdown has extended until 19 May in Baluchistan⁷.
- All Inter-city and inter-province travel is suspended, shopping malls are closed to prevent public gathering.
- Police are authorised to charge people who breach the lockdown rules. This is observed mostly in urban areas.

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1554903>