

PAKISTAN COVID-19 RESPONSE AND THE USE OF POLIO ASSETS

In Pakistan there are over 3,000 confirmed cases, 45 deaths and reports of local circulation in many parts of the country until 5th April 2020. Following the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) guidelines, like many other countries, all Polio campaigns have been put off till June 2020. However, all polio assets; surveillance, data and communication have been rerouted to support COVID-19 response. Following are the areas of support:

1. Technical support, strategic planning & coordination

- UNICEF-PEI Team Lead is supporting the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Coordination as COVID Coordination Task team member at the national level. The entire polio team members are providing technical support through different task teams.
- This is being replicated at the provincial level. UNICEF's Monitoring & Evaluation unit is leading the data management while the Communication team is supporting call centre, social media cell management and support to the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE). UNICEF Community-based vaccinators' (CBV) operations team is fully integrated into the health management team.

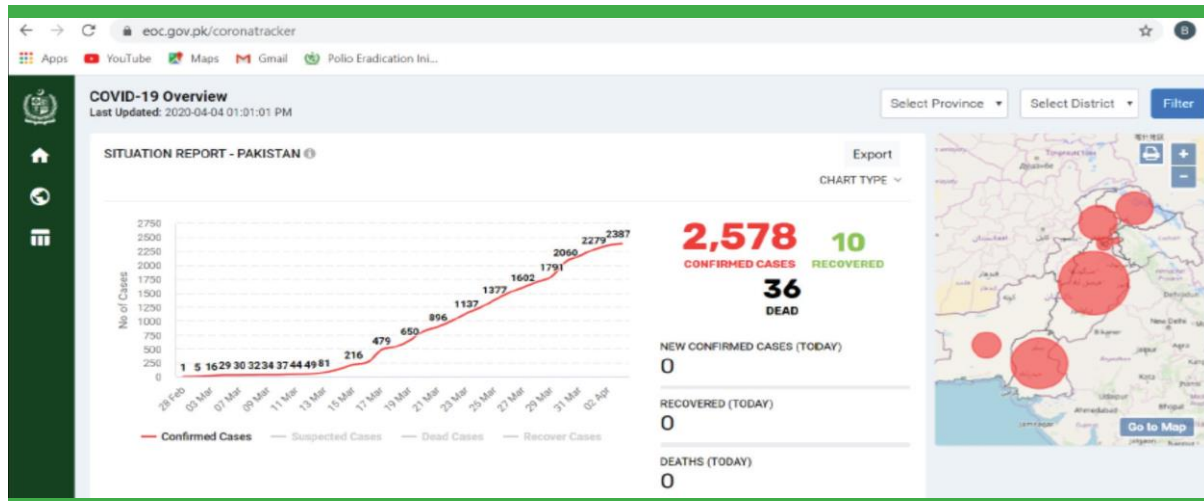


"I've been working in this Helpline since the inception. I feel so proud that I'm serving so many people only by providing information on polio and Coronavirus," Sadia said with pride. She is one of the 55 agents working in the Helpline. The Helpline operates from 8 am to 12 midnight in three shifts for seven days a week.

2. COVID database development

- Data management team from Polio Eradication programme is deployed to support COVID-19 data management team. Focal persons are identified and trained for the data entry at the facility level such as Hospitals, Quarantine sites and Labs. Provincial EOCs and respective polio core team members are overseeing this.
- Supporting the data management process across the provinces. Staff members from the data support center are also mobilized for data entry at the facility level. Within Polio Dashboard, COVID-19 Database is designed which is automated from IDIMS to National EOC server for real-time monitoring.

COVID-19 Database



3. Communication

One of the major areas of support from the polio programme has been the use of its several communication platforms in support of the COVID-19 response.

1.2 million household tracked through the CBV Communication Network

- The CBV communication network is the biggest asset for Polio. The national and the provincial staff are primarily responsible for giving technical guidance through the Risk Communication & Community Engagement Committee (RCCE).
- The biggest challenges have been faced at the sub-district level for social mobilization, community and parental engagement. Just like polio, the frontline workers (FLWs) have faced the brunt of the crisis with multiple expectations from various quarters.
- The programme priority has been to keep them fully protected and at the same time, build their capacity to answer communities' concerns and remain relevant as a community resource person.



CBVs in Balochistan reaching people

1,016,741 cumulative calls received (from 31st January 20 to 4th April) "Sehat Tahaffuz" Helpline (1166)

- Co-opted by the government to support COVID-19 response. Technically wasn't ready for such rapid change in call load. Both technical and HR capacity being boosted (from 55 to 250) to receive and address additional COVID-19 call load.
- The cumulative number of calls received 1,016,741 (from 31st January 20 to 4th April) and cumulative number of calls answered 104,319 during the same period.
- New 100 trained Helpline agents joined on 5th April (total agents 185) which is going to enhance response capacity

.44 million reached through NEOC Social Media cell

- Facebook: posts on COVID-19, reached 0.44 M, engaged 5,730 and shared 10 times on an average.
- Twitter: overall impressions 10.4k, engagement rate was 3.5% and retweeted 100 Times. Negative media relating Polio and Corona countered.



Behavioral research conducted

- Polio Anthropologist designed and fielded a tool through phone interviews with key informants within the CBV structure. The findings from all the four provinces available.
- Data collected on awareness, care seeking, key concerns, rumours and misconceptions, major influencers and sources of information. Gender differentials on key practices also covered. This study is informing the national RCCE communication strategy and materials.

255 Videos recorded and shared on multiple local WhatsApp groups engaging 10,138 high- risk populations

- Information, education and communication (IEC) & other materials developed and disseminated through CBV/ ComNet. Innumerable videos developed featuring religious leaders and other influencers. Videos uploaded on social media & other platforms.

7,133 Religious leaders & 26,485 other influencers engaged

- Through existing polio alliances, religious leaders mobilized at different levels (Provincial, District & Union Council Level). Main 'ask', to promote social distancing and praying from home. Religious leaders have given video messages and offered their social pages for dissemination of materials and messages.
- Initial resistance in all provinces, intensified engagement led to positive shifts. Currently, religious leaders and other influencers primarily engaged through phone calls & WhatsApp. Other influencers included political and elected leadership, community elders, doctors and teachers.

Distribution of leaflet by Polio Frontline workers



1,040 Journalists & bloggers engagement

- Engaged daily through WhatsApp groups. Orientation conducted of journalists and bloggers to counter negative media and Coronavirus myths. Existing good will of the Polio Eradication programme utilized with the journalists to access their social pages. Positive videos uploaded on their social pages.

4.8 million mosque announcements- Social mobilization

- Polio mapping of mosques utilized to reach out imams and for mosque announcements. Mosques remain central for information dissemination. Social mobilization activities are primarily through mosque announcements and use of public address system mounted on motorbikes and rikshaws.

17,896 frontline workers and other staff Trained and oriented

- The entire training team comprising of 62 staff across Pakistan has been virtually trained (using Zoom) on the overall situation of COVID-19 and key messages on Social Distancing, Symptoms and Prevention to make sure they are well-equipped. They can be engaged, as and when required, to conduct online- sensitization of FLWs on COVID-19.
- A comprehensive template for mapping WhatsApp groups used by training team to connect with FLWs and other staff/community has been shared to know how many staff/UCs we can be reached for continuous dissemination of information and key messages in recent future.
- Total number of district staff trained across Pakistan has been 50 and the trainings will continue to reach all the district staff members. 17,784 FLWs across Pakistan have been oriented on overall COVID-19 situation and training will continue in the coming weeks.

Media monitoring for COVID-19

- Polio team has supported the RCCE team in timely mass media monitoring on COVID-19 which includes daily reporting trends in the print and electronic media at the national and regional levels.

Translation of technical documents on COVID-19

- Polio team has also extended its support through their contractor translator, in translation of a wide range of technical documents on COVID-19 into Urdu and regional languages for local consumption such as Guidelines for the Frontline Workers, Journalists and Communities and social distancing.



Micking by the frontline workers

Links of selective videos:

Quetta: <https://www.facebook.com/polioeradicationinitiative/videos/897807330676094/>

Karachi: <https://www.facebook.com/polioeradicationinitiative/videos/202770864346237/>

Religious leader on social distancing:

<https://www.facebook.com/polioeradicationinitiative/videos/3253487118018029/>

Popular actress: <https://www.facebook.com/polioeradicationinitiative/videos/232837784768012/>

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