

Media Update

10 November 2020

UNHCR

PRESS RELEASE

Over 50,000 Afghan refugee families benefit from emergency cash assistance

ISLAMABAD, 10 November 2020: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has provided emergency cash assistance to over 50,000 vulnerable Afghan refugee families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan.

The UNHCR emergency cash programme follows the Government of Pakistan's Ehsaas emergency cash programme, where vulnerable Pakistani families receive a one-off cash grant of Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77). UNHCR is targeting 70,000 of the most vulnerable refugee families.

This assistance is being carried out in close collaboration with the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and with the Pakistan Post. The Pakistan Post is currently disbursing the emergency cash assistance.

On Tuesday, UNHCR's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte – who is on a three-day visit to Pakistan – participated in the distribution of cash assistance to refugees at a Post Office in Islamabad. He also interacted with Afghan refugee elders. The UNHCR Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Noriko Yoshida, and senior officials from the Post Office were also present on the occasion.

Mr. Ratwatte appreciated the progress achieved in reaching the significant milestone of 50,000. "I hope that efforts will continue to be made to reach the remaining vulnerable families affected by the pandemic," he said.

Pakistan hosts over 1.4 million Afghan refugees, and during the pandemic thousands of refugees, including daily wage earners, were left without a source of income.

Mr. Ratwatte said that the assistance will help those hardest hit by the economic downturn. “Emergency cash assistance enables refugees to meet their most urgent needs,” he said.

He also thanked the Government of Pakistan for providing refugees with access to public services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pakistan Post offers a protected environment for male and female refugees to receive their cash.

Appreciating the generous support of the international community, particularly Japan, the United States of America and the European Union, Mr. Ratwatte said donor support has been crucial at a time when refugees were going through immense challenges.

During Mr. Ratwatte’s stay in Pakistan, he will meet with senior Pakistani government officials, donors and UN representatives.

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Photo caption:

During his visit to Pakistan, the UNHCR Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, hands over emergency cash assistance to an Afghan refugee at the Pakistan Post Office in Islamabad. © UNHCR/A. Shahzad