

5th June, 2020

Background of COVID-19:

First identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first case may be traced back to Nov. 17, 2019.

On Jan. 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that a novel coronavirus was the cause of a respiratory illness in a cluster of people in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, which was reported to the WHO on Dec. 31, 2019.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of smell and taste. The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, most often via small droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, and talking. The droplets usually fall to the ground or onto surfaces rather than travelling through air over long distances. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days, but may range from two to fourteen days. It is most contagious during the first three days after the onset of symptoms, although spread is possible before symptoms appear, and from people who do not show symptoms (asymptomatic cases). While the majority of cases result in mild symptoms, some progress to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) likely precipitated by a cytokine storm, multi-organ failure, septic shock, and blood clots. As of June 4, 2020, more than 6.39 million cases have been reported across 188 countries and territories, resulting in more than 383,000 deaths. More than 2.78 million people have recovered.

COVID-19 Situation in Pakistan:

Pakistan received its first case of COVID-19 on Feb. 26, 2020, when a student in Karachi tested positive upon returning from Iran. By March 18, cases had been registered in all four provinces, the two autonomous territories, and the federal territory of Islamabad.

As of June 4, 2020, there have been about 85,264 confirmed cases with 30,128 recoveries and 1,770 deaths in the country.

The country was put under a nation-wide lockdown, which was eased in phases. During the lockdown period, only the essential services businesses and healthcare facilities were allowed to work under standard operating procedures (SOPs).

How COVID-19 Spreads:

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People

Onward publication of any information provided by PHF is prohibited, except on written request and with the express permission. PHF members and partners retain the ultimate responsibility for any risk management decision. This information is provided based on information from multiple sources. Whilst every effort has been made to verify the information and ensure it, the forum cannot guarantee its accuracy. The forum does not accept any liability from the use of, or reliance upon, the information provided.

with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

PHF Members' Position During COVID-19 Proceedings in Pakistan:

PHF represents 43 International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) members operating in Pakistan to support the humanitarian and development needs of the vulnerable communities.

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) decided to adopt SOPs for already registered INGOs, who wanted to operate and facilitate authorities in Pakistan, during the COVID-19 crisis in the country. Under this announcement, the government, therefore, issued the NOC for INGOs' projects relating to COVID-19 emergency immediately, subject to compliance with the certain guidelines.

During the lockdown period, most of the staff of the INGOs were advised to work from home, except the staff engaged in relief activities in the field.

Workplace Guidelines for INGOs:

Since the lockdown has been lifted, PHF sought a clarification from the Ministry of Interior about the SOPs for the employees going back to office premises. They have advised to take precautionary measures and to follow standard SOPs and guidelines that are being shared by the authorities. As hostels and hotels are remain closed, therefore it is not recommended for INGOs to call their out-station employees back to their respective workplaces.

Now is the time to prepare for COVID-19. Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference. Action now will help protect your employees. Certain documents and decisions that PHF and its members have received till date, do not indicate particularly if the INGOs can resume operating their offices as per normal practise or keep their staff working from offices on rotation basis. However, it is advisable to resume working on rotational basis by following standard guidelines strictly:

- Facemasks are mandatory to be worn by everyone.
- Once the mask is worn, it is part of the face and it must not be touched with hands throughout its use. If touched or handled after wearing, then hands must be washed with soap & water or sanitized with an alcohol-based hand rub according to the guidelines of hand hygiene. The mask should be replaced with a new one when it gets soiled or becomes moist. The soiled disposable mask shall be disposed off properly and the reusable one shall be placed in a sealable polythene bag and placed in a dedicated pocket of the dress or in a dedicated pocket of a washable handbag. The pocket of the dress or the bag, in which a soiled mask was saved, shall not be used or handled for any other purpose before washing.
- Avoid physical contact with others as much as possible e.g. handshakes.
- Do not give your mobile to anyone. In case there is a need to share it someone, clean it with a disinfectant.
- Keep a distance of two arm's length (about 6 feet) from others.
- Prefer to stay in contact with others by phone or email.
- Take everyday preventive steps:
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 40-60 seconds. If soap and water are not available, rub your hands for 20-30 seconds with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60-80% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.

Onward publication of any information provided by PHF is prohibited, except on written request and with the express permission. PHF members and partners retain the ultimate responsibility for any risk management decision. This information is provided based on information from multiple sources. Whilst every effort has been made to verify the information and ensure it, the forum cannot guarantee its accuracy. The forum does not accept any liability from the use of, or reliance upon, the information provided.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces within office e.g. door handles, switch boards etc.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces with detergent solution.
- Clean general surfaces and fittings when visibly soiled and immediately after any spillage.
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, photocopier, telephone etc.) focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
- Do not come to office when you or they are sick.
- If you become suspected for COVID 19, ensure home quarantine till there is a confirmed lab diagnosis.
- Stay informed about the local outbreak situation.
- Avoid large and small venues/meetings to reduce the occurrence of transmission – prefer using digital media resources.
- Avoid having any unnecessary visitors.
- Avoid unnecessary use of public transport.
- Take care of the emotional health of your staff and yourself.
- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet etc.
- Advise employees to consult national travel advice before going on business trips.

PHF team will be monitoring the situation and will advise if there are any changes. We appreciate members alerting us to any new information or changes as you become aware of them. Should you wish to contact us, please email at info@pakhumanitarianforum.org Or, please feel free to contact us by phone on +92-051-225 2230/1 if you would prefer to speak in person.

References:

1. [GOP Advisory on Mitigation Strategies COVID-19](#)
2. [GOP Guidelines on Social Distancing during COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
3. [GOP Guidelines for Wearing a Face Mask \(with a mandatory section\)](#)
4. [GOP Guidelines for Cleaning & Disinfection of Environmental Surfaces in wake of COVID-19](#)
5. [Government of Punjab notification to make wearing of mask mandatory in government offices province-wide](#)
6. [Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa notification to make wearing of mask mandatory in government offices province-wide](#)
7. [WHO COVID-19 Cases Definitions](#)
8. [WHO Guidelines for Getting Workplace Ready for COVID-19 \(these are from beginning of March, and haven't been updated\)](#)
9. [CDC Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
10. [CDC Resuming Business Toolkit](#)

Onward publication of any information provided by PHF is prohibited, except on written request and with the express permission. PHF members and partners retain the ultimate responsibility for any risk management decision. This information is provided based on information from multiple sources. Whilst every effort has been made to verify the information and ensure it, the forum cannot guarantee its accuracy. The forum does not accept any liability from the use of, or reliance upon, the information provided.