



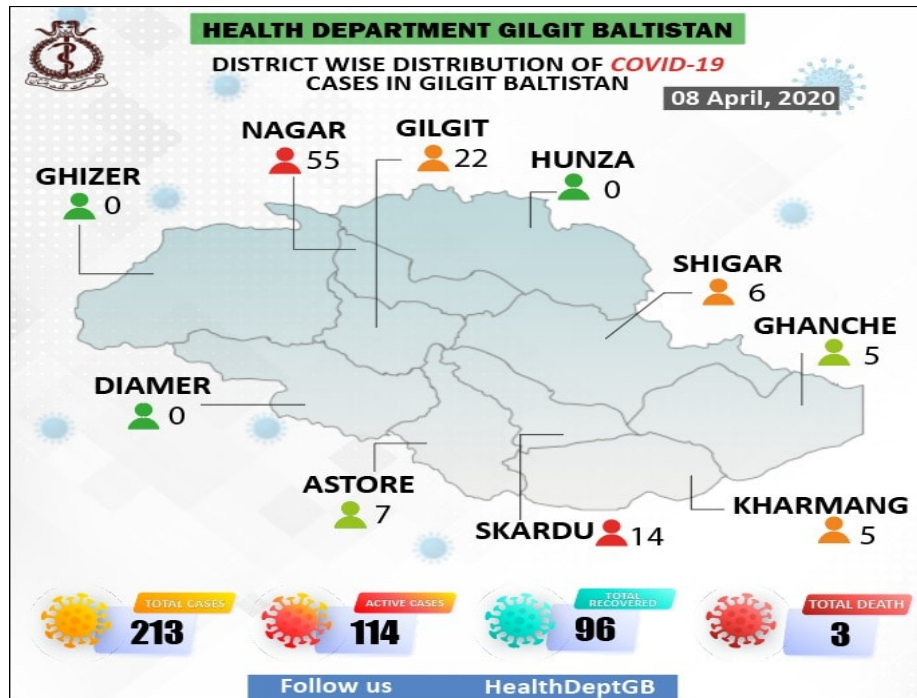
AKRSP's Response to Covid -19  
in  
Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral

April 9, 2020

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme

## 1. SITUATION:

The threat of Coronavirus (COVID19) has now turned into an alarming situation in Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral. The national data shows that GB has highest incidents of Coronavirus affectees as the proportion is higher if we compare it against population of 1.4 million. According to various sources, by April 7, 2020, there are 212 infected cases, 3 deaths and 43 recovered cases in Gilgit-Baltistan. There are 166 active cases. The total number of recovered cases are 43. Statistically, the recovered cases make 43% and death cases 3%. Comparatively Chitral is safer as there are no confirmed, suspected death cases in Chitral region. So far Hunza, Ghizer and Diamer districts in Gilgit-Baltistan are safe from Corona virus pandemic. The following picture presents district wise details of Covid -19 cases in Gilgit-Baltistan.



## 2. CHALLENGES:

There are several issues and challenges emerging with the passage of time in Gilgit Baltistan, and Chitral due to Covid 19. To address the emerging challenges from Covid 19, AKRSP plans to initiate activities on immediate, medium and long term basis. The immediate response will address the shortage of PPEs (Personal Protective Equipments) for paramedical staff, people working in quarantine and isolation centres, administration staff, police on duty, and volunteers; health and hygiene issues in centres; food shortage among daily wager families; collapse of small entrepreneurs; shortage of hygiene supplies (soap etc.) within household; shortage of agricultural supplies (seed, fertilizer etc.); mobility restriction limiting access to health and closure of education institutions; physiological pressure because of closure of religious centres and restricted mobility within home which also tend to increase in domestic violence; shortage of fodder for

animals in rural areas; shortage of fuel within the households; and the most important issue is the lack of awareness among people about this deadly pandemic.

The medium and long term issues that AKRSP foresees are; reduction of agriculture products because farmers are not able to cultivate on time (in high altitude because of lockdown agriculture machinery such as tractors are not available); no or limited access to agri-inputs (seed, plants, fertilizers etc.); lack of cleaning and maintenance of community infrastructure (such as water supply, village link roads) including agriculture infrastructures (irrigation channels, water storage tanks etc.); and closure of income sources workshops, small factories etc.

In order to respond the issues related to WatSan, AKRSP proposes that the efforts to combat the COVID-19 need to be done in three circles. Circle 1, which is called the **RED ZONE**, is the Quarantine and Isolation centres in COVID-19 hit areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. The second circle is called **YELLOW ZONE**, which is the surrounding of Quarantine and Isolation centres. The **ORANGE ZONE**, which is the third circle, includes neighbouring villages of Quarantine and Isolation centre as well as the larger community.

### **3. RESPONSE:**

In the current COVID-19 situation in the area, the LSOs and its member organisations are playing a facilitating role for the local communities and government functionaries with their limited resources. To ward off threats posed by Corona virus in GBC, AKRSP has planned immediate, medium and long term activities. Awareness campaign is the immediate response. In this regard AKRSP in collaboration with local communities and government authorities has taken the following measures to protect local communities.

#### **3.1 AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:**

With the emergence of first cases of Corona in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral AKRSP has developed protocols for preventive measures for AKRSP staff who would be working in offices or field during the time of crisis in awareness campaigns and other related activities. Since the Local Support Organisations are major conduit connecting communities organized in the forms of Village and Women Organisations (V/WOs), AKRSP has developed guidelines for LSOs to disseminate key messages among the local communities across GBC except Diamer district in GB.

ARKSP has carried out awareness raising campaigns for entire population of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral through announcements in villages by using mobile loudspeaker and religious spaces. In the campaign, key messages are displayed in the shape of banners and posters at district, tehsil and Union Council levels. The messages for awareness were developed in the light of WHO Covid-19 guidelines and in consultation with Aga Khan Health Services and local administration in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. In addition to visual and acoustic mediums at public spaces, the key communication messages were relayed at cable networks, local radio and FM radio in

local languages. The mass awareness campaign will continue for the next three months so that more and more communities could receive the awareness messages about COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the local communities are equally supporting and following the precautionary measures announced by the government.



Figure 1 Announcement of Messages on Loudspeaker

At regional level, AKRSP supported District Administration and Regional Council Upper Chitral for mass level awareness campaigns in the entire district. The area was divided into three categories i.e. Sunni Dominated areas (RED), Mix population (Orange) & Ismaili dominated areas (Green). In red areas the awareness raising

campaign was carried out in partnership of district

administration by hiring the services of CHEPS (Chitral Heritage & Environmental Protection Society). The main medium employed for providing key messages was announcements through loud speakers in each villages of red areas, while in orange belt two medium i.e. door to door campaigns by volunteers and loud speakers by CHEPS representatives were under taken. In the green belts Volunteers of Ismaili Regional Councils conveyed the messages of district administration /AKRSP to individual households. They have also established quarantine units in major revenue villages that are purely maintained by volunteers after getting proper NOCs from District Administration and following the protocols set to fight against the spread of COVID -19. Moreover, Banners have been installed in major areas specially in public places & quarantine centers.

In Chitral, on the request of district administration AKRSP Chitral facilitated awareness raising campaign in different villages/valleys/UCs in upper Chitral, focusing red areas where the influx of new comers is high from down district. On the recommendation of district administration Chitral, AKRSP facilitated Chitral Heritage and Environmental Protection Society (CHEPS) in organizing campaigns through providing food and loud speakers to CHEPS personnel.





**Figure 2: Display of awareness banners at public places**

The campaigns are in progress, banners installed in the prominent spots, quarantine centers regarding safety measure. All the LSOs in Upper Chitral have been mobilized to carry out door to door mobilization. Majority of the LSOs have practically started this mobilization through formation of special task force including its board members and mobilizing the local communities in their respective Union Councils regarding the safety measures. BLSO has arranged meeting with district administration and its women social mobilizers are busy in door to door campaigns. UTDN in Upper Chitral have started door to door mobilization and are distributing masks, soaps among the V/WOs in their jurisdiction.

AKRSP is working in consultation with different stakeholders to create awareness as well as disseminate key messages of the District Administration amongst people regarding COVID through FM 97 and Cable Network in Lower Chitral. These activities contribute to the District Administration efforts for prevention of Corona Virus in Chitral. In addition to that, Institutional Development (ID) section of AKRSP is regularly disseminating information related to Corona Virus to LSOs for mass awareness.

The LSOs in Upper Chitral are active to response COVID-19. Conference call meetings were held with the LSOs management through area ID coordinator and are continuously monitoring & backstopping the LSOs activities in Mobilization. The LSOs in their respective areas are holding meetings with district administration departments and mobilizing communities through door to door visits. Some LSOs are distributing locally made masks, soaps and are fixing and distributing information and education materials regarding prevention of the disease. Moreover, the CRPs in priority valleys are in front line with LSOs and administration to mobilize communities and are visiting home based quarantines.

Due to AKRSP's extensive mobilization efforts, LSOs of Skardu and Shigar Districts have started awareness campaigns on their own regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in



Figure 3: Home made masks in Chitral



Figure 4: Awareness session with local community members

their respective V/WOs. AKRSP Astore has also embarked upon social mobilization campaign around corona virus through LSOs and CSOs in Astore area. LSOs in Astore district are supporting the government team in finalizing the lists for relief. In district Astore, local cable operators broadcast awareness messages about corona virus and threat it poses. AKRSP in Ghizer has started its campaign for awareness raising with the help of LSOs. Best Town LSO and Al Karim LSO Tawus are playing active role in the campaign.

In Gilgit district, AKRSP is working LSOs to create awareness about Covid-19 threats to local population. A highly localized plans were made in Gilgit region to work in diverse social context. In Haramosh valley of Gilgit district, the announcements of key messages were made through mosques and *Imam Bargha* after each *azaan*. Also in Bagrote valley, announcements of awareness messages were made f in the afternoon in Sinakar, Furfoo, Hopey, Datuchi, Bulchi, Chira and Bilchar villages. This campaign will continue till April 30, 2020. Similarly, video announcements messages were developed for the suburban village Nomal of Gilgit city, and broadcasted through local cable. In Rahimabad and Jutal areas key messages about Corona threat were pronounced through car by going to each hamlet. In Jalalabad village of Gilgit district, awareness campaign was carried out through *muhallah* level mosques which make announcement twice a day. The following LSOs and Civil Society Organisations are enacting pivotal role in Gilgit district by joining AKRSP's campaign against Corona menace:

1. Haramosh Development Organization.

2. Dubani Development Organization, Bagrote.
3. Nomal Local Support Organization.
4. Rahimabad Local Support Organization,
5. Dubani Welfare Organization Jalalabad
6. Pakeeza Welfare Basin
7. Wildlife Conservation and Social Development organization

### **3.2 COORDINATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT:**

Deputy commissioner Upper Chitral requested AKRSP to assist district administration CORONA response. Area Programme Manager AKRSP organized a meeting with Deputy Commissioner Upper Chitral. In the meeting it was agreed that AKRSP would assist the local administration throughout the Corona situation keeping in view the availability resources. It was also decided that AKRSP would assist in strengthening isolation ward in Government Girl Degree College (GGDC) Booni, where AKRSP would provide missing facilities.

AKRSP in partnership with AKHSP and GGDC Booni provided support to District Administration in strengthening of isolation center in Booni having 12 rooms with attached baths. AKRSP support includes provision of beds with foam, pillows, quilts, pillow & quilts covers, sanitary kits (hand wash, sanitizers, toilet & tissue papers) water & food set, warm & cool water system etc.



**Figure 5: A Room in Isolation Centre in Chitral**

On April 7, 2020, the center was formally handed over to Deputy Commissioner and team in the presence of DPO Upper Chitral and the President Regional Council Upper Chitral. The worthy Deputy Commissioner highly appreciated AKDN role in general and AKRSP particularly for quick response to the request of Administration.



In the time of Corona crisis, AKRSP has facilitated district administration in transportation of passengers, community coming from other parts of Pakistan and districts to quarantine centers, and from these centres to their homes after completing incubation period. Moreover AKRSP is regularly participating in the district level coordination meeting. The administration was critically facing mobility issues due to lack of resources as well as remote and widespread geographic area. Furthermore the lower Chitral is facing high influx of people from down country due to lockdown across the



**Figure 6: Meeting with Deputy Commissioner Upper Chitral**

country. On request of district administration, one vehicle has been provided to facilitate the government staff to travel around the district for overseeing activities.

The quarantine centers have been established in the Lower Chitral for the purpose of screening passengers returning from the down districts. AKRSP is providing food packages to these centers for three times a day. This assistance will continue for 10 days initiating from March 31, 2020 to April 09, 2020 which is being given through the private service provider nominated by the District Administration for catering food to other Quarantine Centers.

On the request of Commissioner Baltistan, Area Programme Manager Skardu/Shigar joined the Divisional Level Coordination Committee formed for the upcoming Ehsas Ration and Cash Programs. AKRSP was assigned the task of data collection and validation of poor households for the ration distribution and cash programs. The AKRSP Skardu team gathered the data from 10 LSOs within 3 days and submitted the list of more than 4000 ultra-poor households to the Deputy Commissioner Skardu.

A District level committee was also formed by Deputy Commissioner Skardu District in which AKRSP Skardu/Shigar was also included as a key member for future coordination. Tehsil Level sub committees were also formed under the leadership of

Assistant Commissioners. AKRSP is also included in these committees as a key member for future coordination. It is agreed with the local administration that AKRSP shall play its part in the fair distribution of food, non-food items and cash distribution to the poor households effected due to the COVID19 lockdown at district and tehsil level. AKRSP Skardu/Shigar reiterated that AKRSP would support in the future relief efforts for the rehabilitation of the COVID-19 effected households through its own resources as well as with the help of other AKDN agencies.

AKRSP Gilgit regularly attend District Coordination Committee meetings at Deputy Commissioner office and coordinate with Assistant Commissioner in verification of needy and poor households. So far, AKRSP in Gilgit district has verified 1200 forms for ration support and submitted to Deputy Commissioner office. Upon the request of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan, AKDN agreed to built an isolation centre for Corona affectees at Chilmis Das, Gilgit. The equipments were handed over to the government in a simple ceremony. Speaking on the occasion Dr. Iqbal Rasool, Director Health Services, Department of Health Gilgit-Baltistan, lauded Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) for helping the government in this difficult time. He said that AKDN and its organisation AKRSP has always been a great partner of the government. “Through collective work we can defeat the menace of Corona” he said. The event was attended by officials from Gilgit-Baltistan health Department, President Ismaili Council, Chairperson Health Board and Head and Senior Management of AKDN agencies.



**Figure 7: Government Officials, President Ismaili Regional Councils and AKDN Staff are handing over equipment to the government of GB**

The list of donated equipments is given in the following table:

S. No	Item description	Unit	No. of units
1	Dustbins	Dustbins	40
2	Toothpastes	Tube	100
3	Tooth brushes	Brush	100



4	Combs	Comb	100
5	Tissue boxes (2 boxes X 36 pop-ups)+(1 X 28 pop-ups).	Boxes	100
6	Beds' mattresses	Mattresses	30
7	Towels (8 packs X 12) + ( 1 pack X 4)	Towel	100
8	Bed sheets (1 carton X 80)+(1 carton X 84)+(1 carton X 26)	Sheets	190
9	Pillows (25 packs X 4)	Pillows	100
10	Blankets (5 packs X 20)	Blankets	100
11	Believia Stethoscopes	Stetho	4
12	Mercurial sphygmometer	Sphygometer	4
13	Wheel chair	Wheelchair	1
14	I.V. Drip stand	Stand	4
15	Stretcher	Stretcher	1
16	Water (1.5 litre bottles)	Bottles	1,500



Figure 8: Consignment of Equipment donated by AKDN

### 3.3. COORDINATION AND SUPPORT TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A regional task force of AKDN regional heads has been established under the auspices of regional council. The task force hold meeting on weekly basis to review response of AKDN agencies to COVID 19 in Lower Chitral. The food security situation especially availability and accessibility of food items to extremely poor households as all kinds of

economic activities have been ceased was identified as most critical issues in priority valleys of Chitral. The precarious situation especially limited availability of agriculture inputs such as potato seeds, beans, tomato and fertilizers in Garumchasma and Karimabad and timely restoration of restoration of irrigation infrastructures was taken seriously as valleys as the sowing season. The Head of AKDN agencies will meet the Deputy Commissioner of Lower Chitral to apprise critical situation in Garumchasma and Karimabad about of availability of agriculture inputs so that timely action will be taken for averting food insecurity situation. All agencies are emphasized to work closely with local administration for collaborative efforts against COVID 19.

Since the outbreak of COVOD -19, the volunteers of Ismaili Local Councils under the patronage of Regional Council have been instrumental in controlling the overall environment by creating mass level campaigns visiting door to door, establishing quarantine centers in their jurisdictions for the people mostly daily wagers coming from down districts and GB province. Upon the request of Regional Councils both upper & lower Chitral and having meetings of AKDN management team Chitral support in the form of food items (Rice, Milk, sugar etc) were extended to 10 Local Councils in upper Chitral. The items were distributed to LCs through President Regional Council Upper Chitral. Moreover, for the continuity & sustainability of awareness programme the resource person hired for awareness raising campaign, trained volunteers on propagation of messages through door to door campaign. To facilitate the transportation of people staying in quarantine at GGDC Booni & GC for boys Booni and for daily monitoring AKRSP extended support to DA by providing one vehicle on 7/24 basis.

#### **4. PROPOSED INITIATIVES:**

Given the severity and urgency of the situation produced by N Covid -9 in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, AKRSP will carry out the following activities on immediate basis:

- Provide food and non-food items to Quarantine and Isolation centers in coordination with local Administration and Health Departments
- Supply Sanitary kits for quarantine / isolation centers
- Support to community based self-initiatives through councils

Based on the need of the each zone, AKRSP proposes the following activities related to WatSan in all three circles;

##### **Circle I (RED ZONE):**

- Provision of hygienic and nutritious food supplies to Quarantines and Isolation centres
- Provision of masks, sanitizers, glosses etc. for paramedical staff in centres and outside centres (check posts, police on duty at centres etc.)

- Supply of non-food items (soaps, tooth brush/pasts, bedsheet etc.) to the affectees in the centres
- Display banners and boards outside of the centres containing instruction to the relatives of the affectees in the centre

**Circle 2 (YELLOW ZONE):**

- Provision of food packs to the needed and vulnerable families around the centres
- Display banners at various places in surrounding of centres
- Frequent announcement of awareness messages through loudspeakers
- Support to establish home based enterprises around centres
- Provide gift pack (soap, detergents, sanitizer, toothpaste etc.) for the families of people living in quarantine/isolation centre

**Circle 3 (ORANGE ZONE):**

- Massive awareness campaign in rural areas through mobile loudspeakers
- Use of cable network and radio as well as mosques for messaging
- Support LSOs for mapping vulnerable and poor families
- Provide food and non-food items to vulnerable and poor families
- Provision of agri-tool kits to poor farmers

## Annexure 1: MESSAGES GALLERY



Figure 9: Banner for Display at District Headquarters



Figure 10: Banner for Display at Tehsil Headquarters

COVID-19
کورونا وائرس

### احتیاطی تدابیر



دوڑھوس سے قبل ہاتھ  
سے اجتناب کریں



20 میٹر کا فاصلہ  
سے اجتناب کریں



ماسک کا استعمال کریں



گھنٹے یا چھتکے کے دوران سڑک  
آٹھویں وڑوہال سے اجتناب کریں



پر کچھ چیزیں خریدیں



غیر ضروری سفر سے اجتناب  
کریں۔ سگور پر چلیں

### کورونا وائرس کی علامات



سردی



کھانسی



گلا خراب



تیز بخار



گھر پر رہیں  
زندگیاں بچائیں



AKRSP



Government of Canada



Gouvernement du Canada



Figure 11: Banner for Display at Union Councils