

SUPPORTING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN PAKISTAN

USAID IS STRENGTHENING THE COUNTRY'S DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND RESPONSE EFFORTS



BACKGROUND

USAID's Integrated Health Systems Strengthening and Service Delivery (IHSS-SD) Activity supports the Government of Pakistan and health departments in all provinces and regions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (and prevent and respond to future pandemics) by helping to strengthen and institutionalize disease surveillance and response efforts at all levels of the health system.

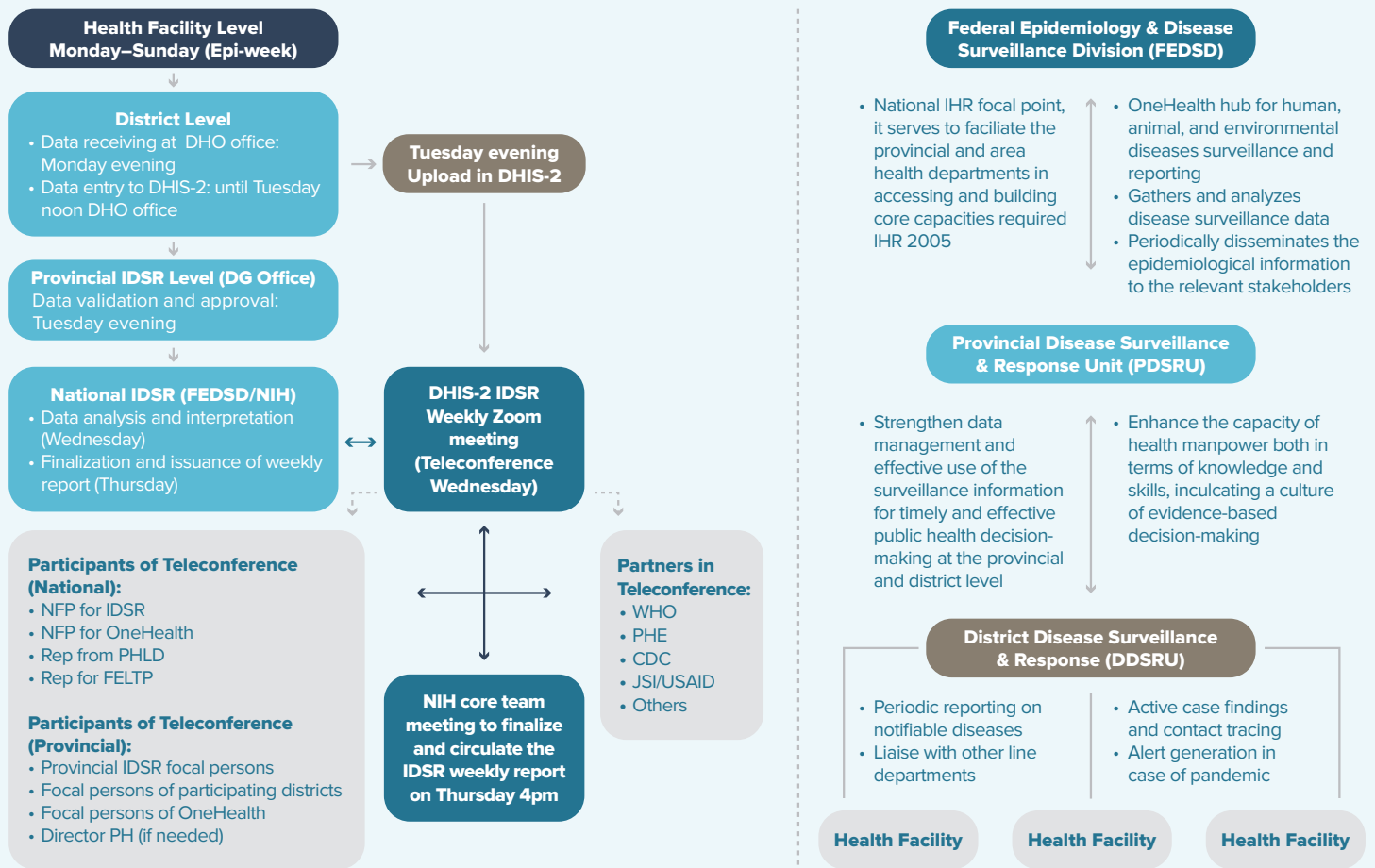
APPROACH

The IHSS-SD Activity strengthened a network of disease surveillance and response mechanisms at all levels of the health system, to enable disease detection and response from the community level, up through the district, provincial, and national levels. At the provincial level, the Activity strengthened Provincial Disease Surveillance and Response Units (PDSRUs) in all six Director General Health Services offices and established Command and Control Centers (CCCs) in all six Health Secretariat offices. At the district level, the IHSS-SD Activity established District Disease Surveillance and Response Units (DDSRUs) in all 155 districts of

The USAID-supported Integrated Health Systems Strengthening and Service Delivery (IHSS-SD) Activity is strengthening the institutional, technical, and leadership capacities of three provincial departments of health: Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



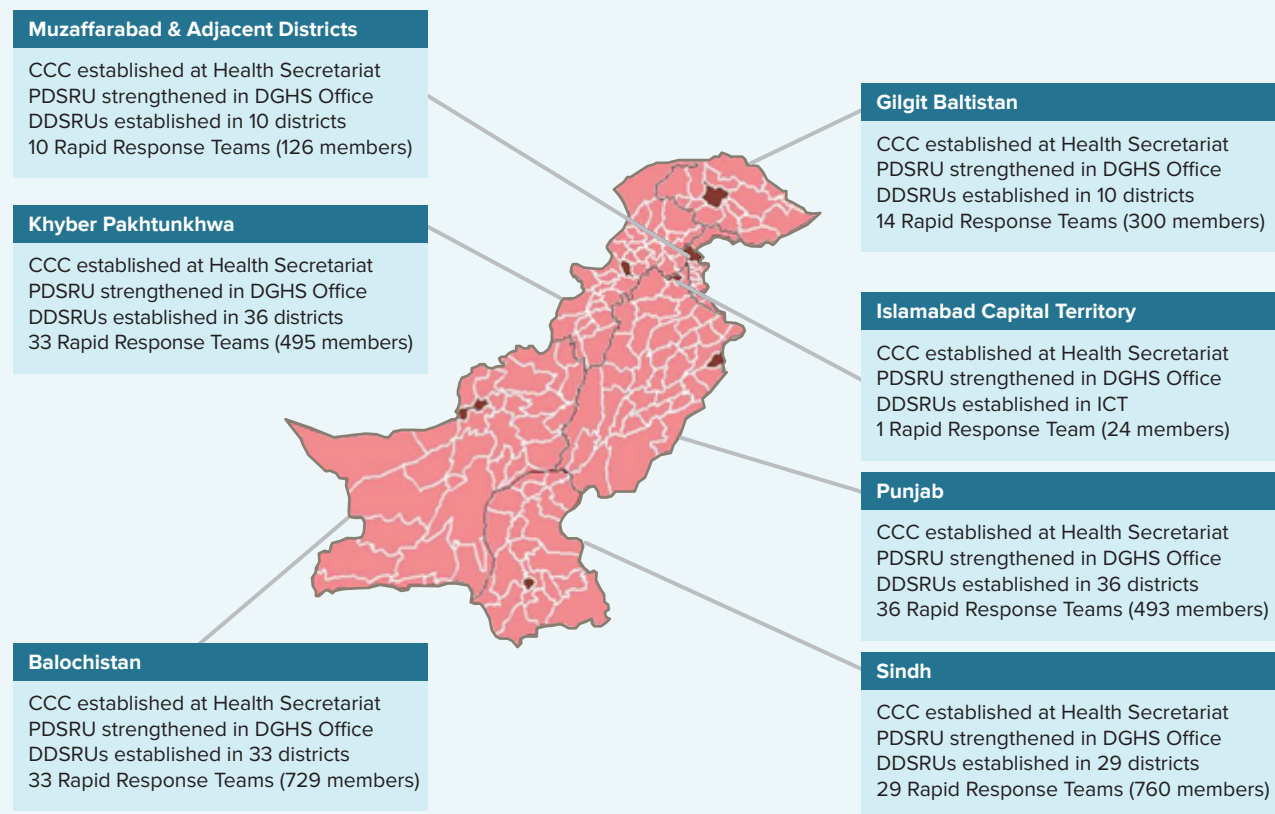
Figure 1. Flow of Disease Response and Surveillance Information Across Health System Levels



Pakistan and built the capacity of health department staff in all 155 districts to carry out the work of the units.

The PDSRUs were established in 2015 with support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. In 2020, it was clear that PDSRU staff needed additional training and that linkages between the PDSRUs and DDSRUs needed to be strengthened, allowing for better and faster communication between the two levels. The IHSS-SD Activity team provided technical assistance and supported training for PDSRU staff across the country. The PDSRUs now have the capacity to generate weekly disease bulletins, are virtually connected to their respective DDSRUs, and have become the focal point for Pakistan's Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response System.

Figure 2. Map of District Disease Surveillance Units and Rapid Response Teams



At the six CCCs, the IHSS-SD Activity provided technical, logistical, and HR support to enable the Centers to strengthen policy-level decision making and multi-sectoral planning to better address the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the district level, the IHSS-SD Activity team strengthened DDSRUs by supporting infrastructure repair work and providing office furniture and equipment (e.g., audio-visual equipment, workstations, computers) and a solar energy backup system to support round-the-clock operations. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh provinces, the Activity provided a training of trainers (TOT) for almost 50 DDSRU focal persons on infectious disease surveillance and reporting and managing notifiable diseases. These trainers now will cascade the training to colleagues in their respective districts. The TOT was held in a new Center of Excellence for Infectious Diseases, established with support from the IHSS-SD Activity. In KP, the Activity provided 36 vehicles to enable Rapid Response Teams (RRTs), which

are housed in DDSRUs, to travel to communities to conduct disease surveillance and response activities.

RESULTS

Pakistan is better prepared to continue its COVID-19 response work and to respond to future disease outbreaks and pandemics. DDSRUs are operational in all 155 districts of Pakistan and are connected to their respective PDSRUs and CCCs for data reporting, analysis, and policy decisions. All DDSRUs have energy backup systems, enabling them to operate 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The IHSS-SD Activity team trained more than 3,000 RRT members from all the districts across Sindh, Punjab, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit Baltistan, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan to conduct rapid response efforts in communities.