

Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release

Ehsaas promotes coronavirus preventive measures while running social protection operations



March 19, 2020- Islamabad: As the coronavirus spreads out and the government takes rigorous measures to slow down the spread of the pandemic, Ehsaas continues educating citizens with health protection guidelines alongside measures to ensure that their services are ongoing. Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation visited an Ehsaas partner loans office today in outskirts of the federal capital. She was accompanied by Qazi Azmat Isa, who is the CEO of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the implementing agency of the Ehsaas initiative which provides loans through partners- Akhuwat being the largest of the 24 partners.

While monitoring the Ehsaas interest free loan operations, Dr. Nishtar, advised the public not to panic but follow the precautionary measures being communicated by the government. Talking

to the media, she stated, “As a social protection ministry, we are conscious that we need to continue assisting those who need our services, the most in these difficult times. Day before yesterday we decided to continue running our cash transfer operations for the Ehsaas Kafaalat beneficiaries, as these families need financial assistance. However, on the other hand we closed our registration centres, where large number of women congregate for registration.” She said, further adding, “We have to strike a balance between safety and assistance, as the latter is the need of the hour; also we are conscious that we must continue to provide credit in these difficult times, which is the lifeline of the small entrepreneurs and therefore, we decided not to shut our loan offices”.

Qazi Azmat Isa said, “We will take all precautionary measures on loan centers; we have widely disseminated public awareness material and have developed SOPs to ensure that there are no queues and crowds in the field.”

Interacting with Ehsaas loan center officials and borrowers present at the site, Dr. Nishtar said, “For now, there are no plans to close down the operations of 1,110 Ehsaas interest free loans centers. The goal is that Ehsaas centers operate countrywide as normal and citizens get educated about the necessary precautions to stay protected from the fatal virus.”

Borrowers of the interest free loan programme shared their fruitful experience under the programme and appreciated the decision to continue Ehsaas operations amid quarantine situation in the country. As part of Ehsaas safety and wellness protocols, the officials at the loan centers have been advised to cater only 3-5 applicants at a time and ensure the compliance of social distancing while serving the Ehsaas borrowers. The informative flyers featuring precautionary guidelines were also distributed among applicants and borrowers.