"I have been there, and it is not easy"



Muhammad Hussain Muhammad Hussain, a 38-year-old resident of Barakhil village in Nazian District of Nangarhar province, sits at his home anxiously clutching his hands while recounting his experience of contracting and recovering from COVID-19.

On 4 July, Hussain's day began just like any other but within a few hours he found his body getting weaker. Shortly after, he noticed that he was starting to develop a fever, body aches and dry cough. His symptoms pointed to COVID-19 so he decided to stay home and monitor his condition. "It didn't take long for my symptoms to become quite severe. My condition worsened

very quickly and I started experiencing shortness of breath. My health continued to deteriorate fast from that point on," recalled Hussain.

Hussain's brother kept a close eye on him. "Fortunately, my brother had received extensive information on COVID-19 symptoms, and care through WHO's Polio Surveillance Network, community-health workers and awareness campaigns to help him determine the right time to take me to the hospital for medical assistance," said Hussain.

Seeking support to test, detect and isolate

Seeing Hussian's condition considerably worsen within a matter of hours, his brother rushed him to the Jalalabad COVID-19 isolation ward, which hosts severe suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 to provide treatment and help contain the spread of infection. This ward has been set-up by the Ministry of Public Health with support from WHO, entailing training of health care staff and provision of essential medicines, supplies and personal protection equipment.

Once admitted, Hussain was visited by laboratory technicians from the Regional Reference Laboratory of Jalalabad for testing. Within a day and a half of taking the test samples, the laboratory confirmed that Hussain was positive for COVID-19.

"When the pandemic started, there was no COVID-19 testing capacity in Jalalabad or across Afghanistan. WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, swiftly mobilized to ensure availability of COVID-19 testing across the country by establishing laboratories and providing essential equipment and testing supplies. The COVID-19 testing laboratory in Jalalabad was inaugurated in the same week the first COVID-19 case in Nangarhar province was reported," said David Lai, Officer In Charge, WHO Afghanistan.

To date, WHO has supported the Ministry in establishing and expanding 12 laboratories across the country together with ensuring continued provision of essential equipment and supplies, as per need. WHO further plans to facilitate the setup and operationalization of more laboratories in different provinces of Afghanistan to ensure increased capacity for testing, which is crucial for identifying, isolating and treating infected people to prevent the virus from spreading.

Bouncing back



