



Date: 22 October 2020
Document Code: 52-01
Version: 01

Guidelines

Tablighi Ijtama- During COVID19

Objective

To provide guidelines to the local authorities, organizers and participants of Tablighi Ijtama (mass gathering) for planning and preparation to ensure the minimum risk of COVID-19 transmission during the event.

Rationale

Public gathering is a potential risk for the COVID-19 infection and community transmission in the area. The Tablighi Ijtama and other congregations during COVID 19 epidemic should be organized while taking care of the precautions and SOPs pertaining to gatherings to avoid the chances of spread.

Raiwind Ijtama (Urdu: رائے ونڈ اجتماع) is an annual three-day congregation held at Raiwind Markaz, Lahore, Pakistan. The congregation is attended by 0.8 to 1 million people across the world every year. After Dua of last day, groups (Tablighi Jamaat) are formed that go to different parts of the world to preach, and the process continues until the next Ijtama.

Guiding Principles

The size of the Ijtama gathering should be determined based on local safety regulations under the guidance of local health authorities, while keeping view of the local transmission of the infection. Establishing direct links and channels of communication between event (ijtama) organizers, health authorities, local authorities, religious leader (Ameer-e-jamaat) and other relevant stakeholders.

- Keeping in view of the Current COVID-19 situation, Raiwind ijtama is planned from 6th to 8th November ***with no international Participants this year.***
- Districts with evidence of isolated cases or limited community transmission and < 5% positivity rate with no evidence of exposure in large communal settings should be considered to attend the ijtama with ***the number of participants not exceeding the pre-decided and per-district quota.***
- The districts/cities with ***test positivity rates averaging more than 5% for more than a week should not be invited and should not be permitted to attend*** the Tablighi ijtama.
- Every year as per criteria event is concluded with country's participants divided in to 18 regions. With 10 regions (Group-1) participate on rotation basis of current year and 8 regions (Group-2) participate next year. As per prevailing COVID 19 Pandemic situation below given limited region is advised as per district criteria. (list of the Regions attached as Annex)



S.no	Regions (Provinces/ District/City)	Number of participants suggested
1.	Lahore	6000
2.	Peshawar	9600
3.	Multan	6000
4.	Baluchistan	6000
5.	Faisalabad	4800
6.	Karachi	9600
7.	Dera Ismail -Khan	6000
8.	Swat	6000
	Total	54,000

- For *this year ~ 54,000 invited participants are allowed to attend* the ijtama with district wise criteria of distribution of attendees, however it is advised to keep the numbers as far less as possible.
- **Outdoor gathering only** are strongly recommended during the Ijtama in which individuals should remain spaced at least 6 feet apart
- **Scrutiny of the individuals** will be as per invitation at each regional Markaz, proper documentation and sharing the details with respective districts administration for the Testing Trace and Quarantine (TTQ) on return.
- **Children, and participants at higher risk for severe illness should not be allowed** to attend the ijtama (including older adults >65 years age and people of any age with underlying medical conditions i.e. (Hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, chronic Bronchitis etc.).
- **Hand shaking and hugging should not be** allowed while greeting each other, for participants

Guidance before attending the congregation (ijtama)

- All participants should be briefed about safety precautions, hand sanitation, distancing and face mask use at an appropriate time before the travel starts.
- **Symptomatic screening should be ensured at the point of origin** (district/city) for all the participants before embarking on the journey.
- The respective district leaders of the Jamaat (Ameer-e-Ijtama) should ensure the symptomatic screening of all the participants at the point of origin before departure.
- If any intended traveler is having symptoms of COVID 19 or contact of COVID positive person in last 14 days, should be tested and only allowed to participate if tests negative for covid.
- It will be mandatory to wear the face mask in the Ijtama. All participants to bring adequate PPEs and Supplies for the Ijtama event: including soap, water, **at least 10 face masks and one hand sanitizer**, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes and cloth face coverings (as feasible).
- **During travelling participants should maintain adequate distance in the transport** vans/buses (e.g., skip rows or keep middle seat empty) where possible. Drivers and the Travelers should practice all safety actions and protocols (e.g., hand hygiene, face coverings, use of hand sanitizers). Driver should clean and disinfect buses or other transport vehicles before and after the travelling.



Guidance during congregation (Ijtama)

- **Sign posting and Messages**- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures in different local languages.
- **Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette, Cloth Face Coverings/Face masks**; should be mandatory
- Conduct daily and health checks (e.g., thermal and symptoms-based screening) of all attendees and members

Social Distancing /Physical Barriers

- **Prioritize outdoor “bayan”** and congregation activities with seating capacity of 6 feet apart as much as possible.
- Use loud speakers at the congregation site so that people may hear the “bayan” while maintaining the social distancing.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating one-way routes)

Avoid Staggering at Communal spaces;

- Stagger use of shared indoor spaces such as halls, and lounges as much as possible and clean and disinfect them frequently before and after the use.
- Avoid staggering along with the proper management of the crowd at the arrival and dispersal time by maintaining the 6 feet social distancing through arranging the participants in rows of 2 feet apart and multiple entry and exit points.

Cohorting the participants.

- Ensure that participants and groups are as static as possible by having the same group of the participants from the same districts in one demarcated location.
- The same district Ameer -e-jamaat should be assigned to a fixed cohort of participants, where possible, to minimize the exposure of different groups to each other during the communal activities with social distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces before, during and after the ijtama event
- Avoid sharing cell phones, camera and other devices unless disinfected.
- Clean and disinfect the Mats with sodium carbonate in the congregation/bayan place

Food Service

- Avoid offering any self-serve food and self-cooked options, such as buffets and communal meals. Consider having pre-packaged boxes or bags for each participant to be delivered directly to the person, if not possible the dinner must be served to the individual camps with all standard hygienic measures.
- Use disposable food service items including utensils and dishes. If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water.



Wash Rooms /Restrooms/Ablution areas

- Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom/ablution areas without maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from other people. It may be helpful to post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate social distance.
- Ensure that restrooms are operational, cleaned and disinfected regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, and light switches

Ventilation

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible. If portable ventilation equipment like fans are used, take steps to minimize air from them blowing from one person directly at another person to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses

Accommodation

- It is advised that camps of the participants must be in outdoor place and with bedding arranged in camps to the minimum safe distance of 6 feet in a normal sized camp.
- The camps areas should be marked keeping in view of maintaining the social distancing of 6 feet.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Ijtama organizers should consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

Regulatory Awareness-

- The ijtama authorities should be aware of the Federal or Provincial regulatory policies related to group gatherings.
- The ijtama attendees from other countries should follow the standered guidelines for the travellers before attending the ijtama.

Testing of participants

The local authorities should make arrangements for RT-PCR testing facility onsite, with a rapid turnaround time of the test result (not more than 10-12 hrs). Ijtama participants should be recommended for COVID-19 test, in consultation with local health officials in following circumstances:

- Asymptomatic individuals with recent known or suspected exposure to COVID-19.
- Individuals with signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19
- Sentinel testing of all or selected groups of individuals in consultation with local health officials

Isolation and Quarantine place

- Designated isolation/quarantine place for the symptomatic persons should be established at a separate location for suspect individuals, till the test results are confirmed negative.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

- Designated administrator/team from the jamaat will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns, testing coordination and collaboration with the local health authorities, as needed



- The ijatama mangers are advised to retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities to contact trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 or if one or more members become ill shortly after the event.

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Urooj Aqeel and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

Annex

For more information, please contact:

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrc.gov.pk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial>

<http://www.hsa.edu.pk/>

<https://twitter.com/nhsrcofficial>

<https://www.nih.org.pk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/NHSRC-PK>



Group 1	Group 2
Sargodha	Lahore
Gujranwala	Peshawar
Raiwind	Multan
Bahawalpur	Baluchistan
Sindh	Karachi
Dir	DI-Khan
Banu	Swat
Kohat	
Mardan	
Mansehra	