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Situation Update (4) from Christian World Service (3 pages)

“Weather Conditions Cause Challenges and Delays in Relief Efforts”

August 11, 2010 (Pakistan time)

Prepared by CWS implementing partner Church World Service - Pakistan/Afghanistan

Background:

Torrential rains along with excessive water flows from the swelling Indus River have caused massive destruction to millions of people in Pakistan. The floods which began in the northern parts of the country have spread to four provinces covering over 132,000 square kilometers.

According to media sources the flow of the Chenab River is still increasing and forced about 750,000 people to evacuate yesterday from Muzaffargarh. While hundreds of people in Bala Nari, Bolan District in Balochistan called for relief efforts as water levels increased rapidly. Several villages from the districts of Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Harnai, Ziarat, Bolan, Loralai, and Kohlu reported large-scale devastation.

In Sindh, most villages in the area of Dadu and Mehar Taluka have been flooded. Rescue efforts by the army continue in villages near river embankments. Information from the District Administration Dadu revealed that a total of 186 villages have been affected in seven union councils displacing approximately 38,656 individuals.

In Peshawar, twenty-five bridges have washed away in addition to destroying homes and crops. Such extensive damage has made many areas throughout the country inaccessible by road. Challenges and obstacles in relief efforts to flood-affected families have accelerated due to stormy weather, landslides, broken roadways, and disrupted communication channels which also delay relief work. Even roads which are open often are closed due to poor weather conditions and rains, thus making traveling in these areas uncertain.

Bad weather conditions also grounded relief helicopters on Monday, August 9 in Mingora, Swat District. Even when aid reaches the communities through helicopter, challenges exist. Recently, media has shown footage of relief items being dropped from helicopters and crowds of people running to collect the items. There is no way to know who received the aid or to assess what other aid is required by the communities because the helicopters are not landing for the distribution.

While the needs of affected people may be extensive, concerns about insufficient or no access to healthcare and sanitation facilities are also increasing. The longer people remain without shelter, food, and safe drinking water, the higher the risks are for illness.

Because of the inaccessibility of many places by road, relief efforts are centralized in selected areas. Recipients of relief goods travel, by vehicle and by foot, to reach the distribution points to receive aid. However, delay in relief items reaching the distribution points means that the affected communities must wait longer for the shelter, food, and other items which are immediately required for their survival. A CWS-P/A team came across a group of approximately 200 individuals who were waiting for relief goods promised by an organization that had yet to



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arrive. The men had traveled from two union councils, Chail and Bishigram, to a point in Fatehpur Union Council, Swat. Frustration was high as after their long travels, no goods and no information were available; meanwhile, their families were waiting for them back in their villages.

CWS-P/A Response:

Christian World Service partner CWS-P/A has stated its commitment towards a transparent and accountable response. As part of this, CWS-P/A has planned ten introductory workshops on Sphere's Minimum Standards in Disaster Response and the HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management for humanitarian organizations operating in the Pakistan, which will begin next week. This initiative aims to maximize the ongoing efforts of aid agencies to be more objective by adhering to Sphere and HAP standards. Quality and accountability are essential for responding to this widespread devastation especially with many uncontrollable factors currently affecting relief efforts.

Christian World Service working through CWS-P/A and its partners continues relief efforts during this time of crisis in providing immediate relief to families affected by the worst floods in Pakistan. As of August 6, distribution of approximately 70 tons of food items for 500 households in Balochistan and Khyber Pakthunkhwa is complete. The procurement for an additional 630 tons of food items for 4,500 households in these provinces as well as in Sindh is currently underway for immediate distribution. An additional 700 tons of food will be distributed the following month. 2,500 tents will also be dispatched to Balochistan and Khyber Pakthunkhwa in the coming week. Another 70 tons is expected to be distributed to 500 flood affected families in Allai District within the next couple of days. CWS-P/A teams are currently conducting assessments and verification of identified beneficiaries for the planned distribution.

Furthermore, CWS-P/A is currently in the process of procuring 420 tons of food items for distribution to 3,000 affected families in Naseerabad, Balochistan Province. An additional 420 tons of food items will be distributed the following month.

CWS-P/A is also providing emergency health assistance through its mobile health unit in Balakot, Mansehra District. The mobile health team has already treated hundreds of flood-affected patients in Punda Balla Village and Shah Ismailabad in Mansehra. Two additional mobile health units for Swat and Kohistan are expected to be mobilized in the next couple of days.

Before the onset of the floods, CWS-P/A has been managing three basic health units in Mansehra and another three in Swat. These BHUs have been providing preventive and curative health services to around 100,000 individuals in the area. Although some of these BHUs had to close down during the flood emergency, all of them are currently fully operational and continue to serve both regular patients as well as those affected by the flood. With the onrush of floodwaters in the community, occurrence of water-borne diseases has risen dramatically in these areas and the BHU staff members have been working non-stop in assisting the community in addressing these issue through health education, IEC material, and chlorination of water sources.

See below for Christian World Service contacts



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