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Humanitarian Assistance to IDP's in Pakistan

UN agencies concerned over 'massive displacement' in Pakistan

8 May 2009 – The United Nations agencies tasked with protecting refugee and children's rights today expressed deep concern over the "massive displacement" in north-west Pakistan caused by the widening armed conflict between Government forces and militants.

The provincial government estimates between 150,000 to 200,000 people have already arrived in safer areas of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) over the last few days, with another 300,000 already on the march or about to leave, according to the UN High Commission for Refugees (**UNHCR**).

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UNHCR noted that those fleeing the latest escalation of hostilities in Lower Dir, Buner and Swat join another 555,000 previously displaced Pakistanis who had fled their homes in the tribal areas and NWFP.

The new influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) will place huge pressure on the resources already shared by around 93,000 people sheltering in 11 UNHCR-supported camps and over 450,000 staying in rental accommodation or host families.

To date, more than 83,000 recent IDPs from Buner, Dir, and Swat have been registered, including almost 5,000 staying in three new camps and more than 78,000 people who are staying outside of camps.



In Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and other urban centres of the Punjab, UNHCR has registered a further 40,000 displaced people mainly from Bajaur, Mohmand and Swat over the past two weeks.

As part of a joint UN response to the influx of people fleeing the fighting in Lower Dir, Buner and Swat over the past week, UNHCR has helped establish three new camps, including Jalala and Shiekh Shehzad camps in Mardan and Yar Hussain in Swabi district.

In the last two days, an increasing number of families from Swat have gone to the Jalala camp, travelling in rickshaws, cars, small trucks and buses with little more than the clothes on their backs, UNHCR spokesperson Ron Redmond **told reporters** in Geneva.

New arrivals told UNHCR staff that they had trouble finding transport and had to pay steep prices to hire vehicles. One family of 20 from Buner reported paying the equivalent of \$350 to travel to the camp from their home. Another man from Mingora, Swat, drove with his family in his rickshaw a harrowing seven hours to reach the safety of Jalala camp in tears.

Yesterday, a new reception centre – the first of four planned centres – opened on the main Malakand Road at Jalala to give people food, water and information about the camps and registration centres. Plans to provide medical care and transport assistance at the reception centres, as part of the joint UN response, are also underway.

UNHCR is currently responding to the emergency with relief supplies – such as tents, plastic sheets, buckets, jerry cans, and kitchen sets – for 100,000 people, while buying additional supplies for an additional 200,000.

“The majority of those worst affected are children, who have witnessed violence, experienced displacement, and faced interruptions to education and health services,” the UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) said in a news release.

UNICEF noted that it was working closely with its aid partners, as well as the Federal and Provincial governments to provide assistance for people staying with relatives and to support the three new camps established in the last week.

To prevent the spread of disease among children, UNICEF Pakistan is supplying the camps with safe water, sanitation facilities and hygiene kits. The agency has also vaccinated more than 10,000 children under five years of age at transit points, as well as provided ongoing support for orphans and unaccompanied children who are fleeing, including a primary school in one new camp with an enrolment of around 200 children.

The agency also expressed concern for the civilians, especially children, still living in combat zones and “strongly urged all parties to take immediate measures to ensure that children are protected from the effects of armed conflict, and that aid workers and supplies for IDPs and civilians in conflict areas have safe passage.”

Aid for children and families displaced by fighting in Pakistan's Swat Valley

By Antonia Paradela

JALALA CAMP, Pakistan, 11 May 2009 – Kiyamet, a 10-year-old girl, walked with determination among groups of men waiting for aid distribution. Nearby, newly arrived families, sweaty and covered in dust, tried to register at this camp for the displaced in north-west Pakistan's Mardan district.

They came from the neighbouring district of Swat, where an army offensive against militants has provoked the exodus of tens of thousands of people.



© UNICEF
Pakistan/2009/Paradela

The majority of those displaced by fighting in north-west Pakistan are children and women.

According to UNICEF Deputy Representative in Pakistan Luc Chauvin, the UN refugee agency estimates that 360,000 people have been newly displaced in the current military operations in the Swat Valley. Those fleeing the latest escalation of hostilities join 555,000 previously displaced Pakistanis who have left their homes in North West Frontier Province and tribal areas since August 2008 and are living in camps and host communities.

'I thought I would die'

On her walk through Jalala camp, Kiyamet was looking for floor mats. Her family received a tent but they were still sitting on the earth, crushing the stumps of plants in what was only recently farmland. Jalala camp is just a few days old.

The family had arrived the previous afternoon. Mascun Akhtar, Kiyamet's mother, fled with her six children to Mardan after their house was damaged in the fighting. Her husband, a driver, had left earlier to evacuate his employer's family.



UNICEF
Pakistan/2009/Paradela

Kiyamet, 10, feared she was going to die when her family's home got caught in the crossfire. The family fled to a camp for the displaced.

"I was so scared of the bombing that I used to hide in the toilet," recalled Kiyamet. "I thought I would die."

When her family's house was hit by mortar shells, Kiyamet left her hiding place, fell on the floor and injured her face. Everyone in the village had to flee.

Children in urgent need

Displaced by ongoing fighting in Swat, Lower Dir and Buner districts, hundreds of families like Kiyamet's continue to arrive in Jalala and other camps every day. More than half of those displaced are children in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

"Fleeing uncertainty, violence and terror, many of these newly displaced families have arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs," said the UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Martin Mogwanja.

"It is imperative to respond promptly so that these thousands of children have the health, sanitation, support and education services they need," he added.

Coordinated UN response

UNICEF and its partners are part of a coordinated UN response to ensure that displaced children have access to water and

sanitation, immunization and schooling, as well as protection from abuse or exploitation.

In the wake of the latest wave of displacement, UNICEF is providing water tankers and latrines in three new camps. It is also monitoring unaccompanied and orphaned children, and households headed by women, such as Kiyamet's. In addition, the agency is supporting teams that have vaccinated more than 10,000 children against polio at transit points.



© UNICEF
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UNICEF is providing water to the camps for newly displaced families in conflict-affected areas of north-west Pakistan.

In an effort to bring normalcy to children's lives, UNICEF is also helping to establish three primary schools and provide school supplies in two new camps for the displaced.

More support needed

For now, Kiyamet said she was happy at the camp, compared to the situation she and her family faced in their home village. But more support will be needed to meet the immediate needs of newly displaced families like hers and to maintain ongoing activities for those previously displaced.

Pending the issuance of a new inter-agency UN appeal, UNICEF is urgently appealing for \$10 million in emergency funding for the crisis response in north-west Pakistan.

Pakistan: UN calls for global support as number of displaced tops 360,000



Some of the newly displaced outside UNHCR-provided tents in Swabi District, Pakistan

11 May 2009 –

The United Nations refugee chief today appealed for international solidarity to support the hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis fleeing the violent conflict in the north-west as the Government tries to defeat a militant insurgency.

With the help of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**), local authorities have registered more than 360,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) pouring out of Buner, Dir, and Swat since 2 May with more still to come.

High Commissioner António Guterres **noted** that the speed and scale of the latest displacement required an immediate international humanitarian response in support of the growing number of Pakistanis affected by the conflict.

“These are the same people who for decades showed great generosity to millions of Afghan refugees,” Mr. Guterres said in a news release. “Now it is time for the international community to show them the same generosity by supporting humanitarian programmes for the Pakistani displaced.”

UNHCR has opened up its stockpiles in Pakistan to provide thousands of locally bought basic relief items such as tents, kitchen sets, jerry cans, sleeping mats and blankets delivered through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the authorities.

Mr. Guterres announced a UNHCR airlift on Tuesday to rush 120 tons of additional humanitarian supplies to the north-west of the country from its central emergency stockpiles in Dubai.

The chartered Boeing 747 cargo plane will deliver 14,000 plastic sheets, 1,500 large roles of plastic, 10,000 mosquito nets and two large, portable warehouses, bringing the cost of the airlift to \$584,000.

“I call on the international community to support the overall humanitarian effort on behalf of displaced Pakistanis,” said Mr. Guterres. “This is a huge and rapidly unfolding emergency, which is going to require considerable resources beyond those that currently exist in the region.”

In a related development, more than 12,700 registered Afghan refugees have been assisted to return home in the last month with the help of UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation programme from Pakistan.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (**UNAMA**) noted that the numbers are notably lower than the figure for the same period last year.

“However, with ongoing developments in the North West Frontier Province, the return figures are expected to rise in the coming weeks,” the Mission said at a **news conference** in Kabul today, adding that some returnees have cited insecurity as a reason for leaving the province.

UNHCR-assisted returns from Pakistan resumed on 1 April following a halt during the winter months.

Pakistan: WFP Scales Up As More People Flee Fighting

Published on 08 May 2009
Copyright: WFP/Amir Isamil

WFP has revised contingency plans and is preparing to provide food assistance to as many as one million IDPs in Pakistan’s troubled border regions with Afghanistan in the wake of new fighting between the Pakistan army and insurgents.

ROME -- Until this week, WFP envisaged a worst case scenario in which it would provide

food to 600,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the northwestern districts affected by counter-insurgency operations.



But as the confrontation between government forces and militants becomes more widespread, more and more people are taking advantage of the partial lifting of curfews to move into safer areas. The result is that WFP believes it may need to assist up to a million people.

The provincial government estimates between 150,000 to 200,000 people have already arrived in safer areas of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) over the last few days; with another 300,000 already on the move or



about to move.

Main agency providing food

Most of the existing IDP population is living in host communities. WFP is the main

humanitarian agency providing food assistance to these people and in April we provided food to about 450,000 IDPs in NWFP.

Counterinsurgency operations were stepped up during the second half of 2008, pushing up the number of IDPs in need of food assistance. New military offensives against the armed opposition started last week in three districts of North West Frontier Province, resulting in the new displacements.

Pakistan's authorities have requested the humanitarian community to provide assistance to an additional 500,000 IDPs in the wake of military operations in Swat district that started Wednesday.

Mobilizing food stocks

WFP is mobilizing all its in-country stocks and calling forward deliveries in order to assist the arriving IDPs.

WFP-managed Humanitarian Hubs (extended food delivery points) have been increased from 11 to now 15 and three additional hubs will be opened early next week.

WFP has a longstanding programme in Pakistan. Since 1968, WFP has invested more than \$1.4 billion to assist Pakistan's poorest citizens and refugees there.

Agriculture, Rural Development and Poverty Reduction

A

Increased trade within Asia-Pacific key to economic revival, says UN regional body



Shrimp is one of the most important internationally traded fishery products.

7 May 2009 – Taking measures to boost trade among Asia-Pacific nations will be critical for governments in the region to help their economies recover from the turmoil sparked by the financial crisis in the West, according to a new set of United Nations guidelines.

Policymakers from the Asia-Pacific region should focus on exports to drive economic growth and recovery, advised the publication from the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (**ESCAP**).

“South-South trade and investment has significant growth potential in the Asia-Pacific region,” **said** Director of the Trade and Investment Division of ESCAP Ravi Ratnayake.

“Although intraregional trade has been growing, many of the countries in the region still trade more with the United States and Europe than with each other,” added Mr. Ratnayake.

The new ESCAP publication, *Navigating Out of the Crisis: A Trade-led Recovery – A practical guide for trade policymakers in Asia and the Pacific*, provides policymakers with a number of trade and investment policy tools to reverse the economic and social impacts of the crisis.

The guide outlines several practical solutions for integrating markets to help boost intraregional trade, recommends steps to develop and maintain export competitiveness for industries, promotes improvements in national business and investment environments, and encourages the development and use of green technology.

A solution highlighted in the guide is the establishment of national crisis management committees, including relevant ministries - commerce, finance, industry, labour, social affairs - as well as representatives from business and civil society. The committees would enable swift crisis-related actions.

Environment

Leaders in climate disaster response honoured with UN-backed ‘green’ awards

7 May 2009 – Among the five winners of the first-ever Green Star Awards – honoured for work in response to environmental emergencies – are a Brazilian scientific support centre and a leading Swiss laboratory, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced today.

The 2009 inaugural award recipients are Mike Cowing of **UNEP**; the Center for Scientific Support in



Disaster Situations

(CENACID) of Paraná Federal University in Brazil; Spiez Laboratory of Switzerland; the

Government of the Netherlands; and the Government of Sweden.

“I hope that by improving awareness of the environmental consequences of such emergencies, we can improve response to future disasters by having more actors involved,” said John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The Green Star Awards are a joint initiative between UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Green Cross International (CGI) to recognize those who have made remarkable efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to environmental disasters around the world.

“2009 needs to be a year when the world not only seals the deal on a transformational new climate agreement, but also begins delivering a Green Economy,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

He underscored the need to accelerate the “fundamental shift to a low carbon and resource efficient future that fosters

innovation, decent employment and equity between countries and communities, especially in some of the poorest and most vulnerable parts of the globe.”

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