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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.340

Afghanistan (1)

30 November 1999

Pledges and Contributions

The Government of Japan has pledged USD 1.3 million for the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, the largest mine action programme in the world. These funds will enable MAPA to continue operating until the end of the year. Part of these funds will be used to purchase a commercial mine detection system that will be used for clearing residential areas and irrigation canals. Initially tested in Cambodia and being used for the first time in Afghanistan, the machine will speed up clearance, reduce the risk to de-mining staff, and increase the cost effectiveness of the Mine Action Programme.

Since 1992, the Government of Japan has contributed USD 15 million to the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan.

Reopening of Afghan-Iran border

In addition to the border opening with Iran at Islam Qala in Herat, the Iranian border at Milak (Zaranj) is also open.

Health

In collaboration with MSF and ICRC, WHO discussed Afghan health priorities and issues for 2000 at a recent meeting of the Afghan Programming Board. Regional and country-wide shortages of health workers and facilities were cited as contributing to excess morbidity and mortality in Afghanistan, especially the high maternal

mortality rate, childhood deaths from diarrhoea, measles and pneumonia, and young adult deaths due to tuberculosis. WHO explained its four main priorities--safe motherhood, immunisation, control of communicable diseases and epidemic response, and war-related injuries and disability.

NIDs

WHO in collaboration with MoPH, UNICEF and health NGOs conducted meetings in all zones to prepare for the start of the 2nd round of National Immunisation Days (NIDs), 27-29 Nov 1999. EPI supplies have been transported to all regions in the country. All children four years old are targeted even if they have been immunised previously.

Training

In collaboration of MoPH, UNICEF, SCA, AMI and IBNSINA, WHO has successfully completed a four-day training workshop on the implementation of the new Health Information System (HIS) in Puli Alam district of Logar province. Thirty-one male doctors, nurses, and technicians from nineteen health facilities in Logar province participated. WHO provided the participants with collecting/reporting materials, patient register books, tally sheets, and monthly reporting and analysis forms. A similar workshop will be conducted for female doctors/nurses in Logar province this week.

421 In Kabul, WHO conducted a four-day workshop on epidemic surveillance and preparedness for doctors, nurses, and technicians at the library hall of MoPH in Kabul. About 40 male health workers from 18 sentinel sites attended the workshop. During the workshop new health data collecting, reporting and analysis tools and formats including a weekly surveillance system on six epidemic causing diseases were introduced. The participants will start their routine data collecting/reporting according to the new health information system from 1 December 1999. A similar workshop is being held for 15 female health workers.

Education

In Kandahar, UNCHS (Habitat) established girls' schools in the women's community forums of Districts 2 and 6 in Kandahar City. Another community forum in district 6 has been established, which has begun community support activities in education and public health.

Water

With funding from the Government of the Netherlands and Dutch Interchurch Aid, DACAAR has completed a water and sanitation project in Gailan, Ghazni Province. The project has provided 94 wells, 388 baths, and 231 latrines to a total of over 2,500 families in the area. The community participated in the work. The hand pumps will now be maintained by mechanics trained by DACAAR, whose salaries will now be paid by the community.

Rights of the Child

Fifty Afghan women and forty-five Afghan men – in separate sessions in Kabul city – were introduced to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in a day-long workshop on 20 November, the tenth anniversary of the CRC's entry into force globally. This is the first time since the Taliban took over most of Afghanistan in 1992 that the CRC was discussed in a public forum in Kabul.

Organised by UNICEF, both six-hour sessions were facilitated by Radda Barnen, the Swedish Save the Children. Due to gender restrictions, the sessions were segregated by gender. A woman staff member of Radda Barnen (based in Peshawar, Pakistan) conducted the session for fifty Afghan women who work for local or international NGOs or for some of the still-functioning Taliban ministries. The male participants represented different Taliban departments, UN agencies, and NGOs.

The turn-out was greater than expected, and all participants in both workshops asked for additional training in the CRC. While both groups initially expressed reservations about the relevance of the CRC to Afghanistan, where children's rights are routinely violated, by the end of the day, everyone agreed that especially in a country like Afghanistan, people need to be aware of the CRC.

Each participant in Kabul received a newly published booklet containing the CRC in Dari and Pashto. The booklet is a joint publication by UNICEF-Afghanistan Country Office and the Save the Children Alliance.

Radda Barnen had just concluded a 3-day session on the CRC for UNICEF Afghanistan staff – including the Country Of-

fice in Islamabad and Sub-offices in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, and Kandahar -- which was held from 15-17 November in Islamabad. Participants in that workshop also agreed that additional training is necessary. The main objective of this workshop was to ensure that all UNICEF project officers are familiar with the CRC.

Agriculture

Livestock

A Veterinary Service Association management workshop was held in Peshawar for two days. In addition, a vaccination training course for twenty-one women started in Kabul and Jalalabad provinces. The trainees were provided with 6,000 doses of Newcastle Disease vaccine during the course.

In Kandahar, an animal health and production improvement refresher course was completed for fourteen veterinarians.

Routine animal health and production activities in 255 districts countrywide are going on smoothly.

Crops

FAO has supported 300 model demonstration orchards in 54 fruit growing districts of central Afghanistan during the year.

These model orchards are part of an FAO programme to re-establish orchards in Afghanistan. Costing about USD 2,000, each nursery can produce 10,000 fruit trees, or 30 hectares, per year after an initial period of two years.

The FAO programme has contributed to reducing the price of fruit trees on the open market, enabling poor farmers to afford high quality fruit trees. The pro-

gramme has also improved farmers' incomes, because yield has dramatically increased due to improved management practices. By 2005, when the first orchards planted from the output of the FAO nursery programme are expected to reach their full potential, FAO estimates the annual income from the intervention to be worth USD 27 million.

Mine Action

In southern Afghanistan, 80,529 square metres of land were surveyed for clearance last week, and 129,331 square metres have been cleared. Consisting of agricultural, grazing, residential and irrigation canal areas, the cleared areas are now safe for some 240 residents.

In addition, last week 2,927 people received mine awareness training in southern region in Kandahar, Zabul and Urozgan Provinces.

In eastern Afghanistan the explosive ordnance disposal team (EOD) has completed five tasks in Jaji District, destroying unexploded ordnance (UXO), including large bombs. In the same district, Mine Action has also cleared 60,000 square metres of land for the benefit of 150 farm families.

Mechanical mine clearance is underway in Gardez, Paktia Province, where agricultural land is being cleared to make space for a school for 600 students.

Narcotics

In the UNDCP target districts of Ghorak, Maiwand, and Khakriz in southern Afghanistan, the excavation, cleaning, and protection of three karezes were completed during the last week by the communities.

Work on another forty-eight karezes is 70% complete.

Repatriation

Voluntary Return

The repatriation season for 1999 is now approaching its end. During the past week, fewer families returned to Afghanistan. A total of 137 families/715 persons returned from Pakistan, of whom 21 families/142 persons received assistance in Jalalabad, 16 families/95 persons in Khost, 6 families/31 persons in Kandahar and 94 families/447 persons in Lashkargah (Helmand).

Voluntary repatriation from Iran

During the past week, 51 families/270 persons and five Afghan refugees without family-members returned voluntarily to Afghanistan through the border at Milak (Nimroz), coming from Zahedan and Kash in Iran, where they had been refugees for up to twenty years. The returnees received the standard repatriation-grant in Iran. Six families/29 persons crossed into Herat through Islam Qala border.

Forcible return from Iran

During the week, there have been no reports of forcible returns through Naloki border crossing point for the first week in almost one year.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

22/12-99

Issue No.341

7 December 1999

Internally Displaced Persons

Because of fighting in 1999, the United Nations is carrying out an assistance programme for approximately 300,000 displaced Afghans in Kabul, Panjshir, Hazarajat, Darra Souf (Samangan Province), Kunduz/Baghlan/Pulikhumri, and Khoja Ghar (Takhar). The total amount of assistance planned up to May 2000 totals US\$ 12.5 million.

Donors of supplies include UN agencies and NGOs including WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOCHA, and Oxfam. Donors that have pledged or contributed funds include ECHO, USAID, NOVIB, NPO, NCA, SDC, and the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

In addition to UN agencies, several NGOs are involved in the assistance effort. They include ACTED, FOCUS, CARE, Save the Children (US), Oxfam, Aide Medicale Internationale, Action contre le Faim, CCA, Shuhada, GAA, MEDAIR, and Solidarites.

In Kunduz and Takhar, fighting in October and November caused further displacement of civilians. At present most of the displaced are returning to their villages. The ICRC, WFP, and two NGOs are currently involved in supporting IDPs in the areas through the distribution of food and non-food items. One NGO is also planning to assist the local population in repairing damaged shelters.

In Darra Souf district, Samangan province, where 5,000 to 7,000 families

have been displaced in the course of the year, the United Nations has co-ordinated a one-off response carried out by an NGO to distribute essential non-food and food items to 1,000 most vulnerable families.

In the Bamyan valley, the first round of food distribution has been completed, reaching all IDPs who have returned to the valley. Large scale cash for work activities continue to provide employment and assist rehabilitation. IDPs who have been unable to return and remained in the neighbouring districts, such as Panjao and Yakaolang, are a cause for concern. ECHO supported projects in the area have reached some of them, but reports from an NGO active in the area indicate that some may be ill prepared for the winter.

In the Panjshir valley, the total number of IDPs is around 65,000; however, there are indications that this number may be reducing significantly. The United Nations and the NGOs estimate that about 50,000 people are in need of food and 30,000 are in need of shelter. Due to cold weather and recent bombing in Bazarakh, a few hundred IDP families have recently left the area. Work to rehabilitate and winterise public buildings in the Panjshir is almost completed: 1,200 houses have been repaired and 330 new shelters have been built by the NGO ACTED. Non-food items (blankets, shelter material, jerry cans, sweaters) have been distributed to the most vulnerable IDPs. In addition, 2,500 metric tons (MT) of wheat have been distributed to 8,500 families.

Access to the Valley is still a major cause of concern as only one of the two passes into the valley is sporadically open during the winter months. Reaching the Valley from Faizabad through this pass requires a ten-day drive in good weather conditions, which are quite rare at this time.

To obtain access across the front lines from Kabul, a joint commission was established under UN auspices, comprised of representatives from the Taliban and the Northern Alliance.

The first UN crosslines convoy successfully made the trip from Kabul on 6 December. The eight-truck convoy carried 90 MT of wheat flour, 1,000 coats, and 10,000 sweaters. It is planned to send in four more convoys as soon as possible, which will deliver a total of 750 tons of wheat and non-food items.

In Kabul some 16,000 IDPs, of which 10,000 are children, from the Shomali are housed in the ex-Soviet compound. A joint one-off distribution of non-food items (cooking utensils, blankets, plastic sheeting) has been conducted by the UN and NGOs. CSB (Corn and Soya Blend) distribution by WFP and bread distribution by the local authorities is ongoing. The NGO CARE has almost completed winterisation and water and sanitation works. Heating in the compound is being provided by Save the Children Fund/US. The overall situation in the compound is significantly improved since August, when the IDPs first occupied it.

A cause of serious concern is now represented by the IDPs who have found refuge in the homes of their relatives, rented rooms or squatted in empty homes in the city. While it is difficult to accurately quantify the number of recent IDPs in the city, over 20,000 families have been regis-

tered entering Kabul between August and October. A number of initiatives are underway aimed at obtaining more detailed information on the vulnerability of these IDPs and their host families. Cash for work and food for work programs are being finalised to assist this population.

Health

NIDs

WHO in collaboration with MoPH, UNICEF, UN agencies, and health NGOs successfully vaccinated children against polio in the second round of National Immunisation Days (NIDs) in all except five districts of Afghanistan. In some districts, coverage reached 100%.

In Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, even districts near the frontline were reached in the campaign. NIDs activities were implemented in all districts in southern and southeastern Afghanistan and in all northern provinces including Balkhab district of Saripul province and Darra Souf. In the northeast, the campaign in Baharak, Jurm, and Wardoj has been postponed for security reasons. All children four years old and under received the vaccine whether they have been immunised previously or not and even if they were sick.

Due to late global provision of the vaccine, WHO supported a charter flight to bring the medicine for distribution in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Training

With the Ministry of Public Health, WHO has successfully completed a two-month course for female doctors and health workers in Herat. The course started on 2 Octo-

ber 1999 and was completed on 23 November 1999. The 23 graduates of the course were female medical doctors, nurses, and midwives from seven provinces in the northern and western regions of Afghanistan. The course focused on safe motherhood practices, child health, prevention of infectious diseases, primary health care, and preventive medicine. The course graduates will help in improving health care at the district level in the country.

In eastern Afghanistan, WHO conducted two training courses on malaria, one on control and management, and the other on diagnosis. WHO also conducted a four-day training course for eight female health workers in Laghman province on health information systems and training for traditional birth attendants (TBAs) in Paktika and Ghazni provinces. Participants received TBA kits.

In the north, WHO conducted a two-week TB training course for doctors, nurses, and lab-technicians in Mazar-i-Sharif on the management and treatment of TB according to DOTS (Direct Observance of Short Course Treatment Strategy). After the course, WHO will establish new TB centres in Samangan and Saripul provinces.

Medical supplies

In the north, WHO distributed TB drugs to Faizabad Public Health Hospital, medical supplies to Pulikhumri Public Health Hospital, Faizabad TB centre, Takhar Provincial Hospital and Teshkan Clinic, and medical books and guidelines to Pulikhumri, Nassaji, and Mine hospitals. In Jowzjan, Faryab, and Mazar, WHO provided medical supplies and guidelines for surveillance and control of ARI, Diarrhoea diseases, EPI diseases, and TB.

In eastern Afghanistan, WHO distributed medical supplies to six clinics and two hospitals. In the south, WHO distributed medical supplies to Urozgan Provincial Hospital and Khas Urozgan district hospital, and TB supplies to TB patients among returned refugees.

Education

UNICEF is organising the monitoring of the home based schools in Herat city and a sample monitoring form has been developed.

Water

Forty wells, with handpumps, were completed in Momandara district. They will benefit some 14,000 persons. The community shuras (councils) have decided to construct another ten wells, for which UNICEF has already provided handpumps. Thirty-three latrines were completed in this district by community masons under RRD's supervision and technical and financial assistance from UNICEF.

In Mehterlam district, two handpumps were installed, which means that the target of 20 in 1999 has been reached. The handpumps will benefit some 8,000 people of the area.

Social mobilisation continues. RRD social mobilisers arranged a meeting of religious and community elders in Momandara district to discuss importance of safe drinking water and sanitation and the role of women in development. RRD female social mobilisers visited 100 houses in Mehterlam district and surrounding villages with health and hygiene messages.

Agriculture

Livestock

FAO (livestock) distributed livestock vaccines in Kandahar, Helmand, and Mazar. Animal health and production routine activities in 255 Veterinary Field Units are going on smoothly.

Crops

FAO continues its wheat improvement programme in all areas. In southern Afghanistan, three farmer field demonstration plots were planted in Ghazni Province and six were planted in Zabul.

Repatriation

Voluntary Return

During the week some 121 families, comprising 686 individuals, received UNHCR assistance and returned voluntarily from Iran to Afghanistan through the border at Milak (Nimroz). At the same time 20 families (102 persons) voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan, receiving the standard repatriation grant in Kandahar.

Forcible return from Iran

During the week a total of 1,682 Afghans were forcibly returned from Iran through the border at Naloki (Nimroz), comprising 64 families (382 persons) and 1,300 Afghans without family members. Through the border at Islam-Qala, in the Western region, an additional 913 Afghans without family members were deported.

Assistance to returning refugees

The rehabilitation of 1,130 shelters for returnee families in Herat province is ongoing and will be completed prior to the onset of winter as will be projects to provide safe drinking water to returnees and returnee impacted communities in 33 villages in Gulran and Ghorian districts of Herat province.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.342

14 December 1999

Internally Displaced Persons

Across the Frontlines

The first phase of the UN crosslines assistance for Afghans from Shomali who were displaced into the Panjshir valley has been successfully concluded.

After positive negotiations with both parties to the conflict, the UN relief operation began on 2 December. The first phase ended on 10 December with the safe arrival of the fifth convoy. In total through the humanitarian corridor the UN has delivered 750 tons of food and essential non-food items including warm clothes and blankets.

Further crosslines convoys will be needed to assist the displaced in Panjshir.

Children in Kabul

In Kabul, there are an estimated 8,000 children in the ex-Soviet compound (now home to 16,000 internally displaced persons). About 5,500 are older than six, of whom an estimated 2500 children have never been to school. A UNCHS, CARE and UNOCHA survey of the compound found that 2,913 families are staying in residence, of whom 718 arrived recently, while 95 families left during the last few weeks.

Two playgrounds have been established in the compound, which contain swings, a slide, a merry-go-round, a see-saw, a climbing frame, football, and volleyball. About 2,000 children are making

use of this facility. In addition, CARE has constructed fences in dangerous areas of the compound where children could fall. Save the Children (US) has distributed 1331 heaters (one per room) and will distribute wood as well, while the UN has provided 1,200 kerosene lamps.

Action Contre la Faim regularly monitors the nutritional status of the children. Less than 1% severe malnutrition has been reported so far. The malnourished children have been referred to a mother-child health clinic supported by ACF.

UNICEF, Save the Children (US) and Children in Crisis (CIC) are discussing educational activities for internally displaced children in Kabul. They also visited the two buildings provided by the authorities for use as schools. The renovation of these buildings is underway.

UNICEF Kabul in collaboration with SCF-US drafted criteria for the selection of teachers and head masters, which was approved by the Ministry of Rehabilitation after a few modifications. It was agreed that the teachers would have to pass a test for both religious and modern subjects. Based on this 30 applicants were interviewed and 11 selected.

According to Aschiana, the number of street children has increased since displaced persons from Shomali began entering Kabul in August. The survey of children working on the streets which was conducted by UNHCR, TDH and Aschiana in 1996 showed that there were 28,000 street working children in 10 districts in Kabul.

Food Security

WFP Afghanistan has expressed extreme concern about the increasing cost of wheat in Afghanistan, which follows a bad harvest, tightening of border controls in Pakistan, and speculation in Afghan markets. Prices have continually increased since the beginning of October and reached their highest level in the second week of December. Pakistan is the major wheat supplier to Afghanistan.

Twenty to forty percent of vulnerable households in Kandahar, Kabul, Ghazni and various food insecure rural areas in the southeastern regions and Central Hazarajat have already been affected by the increase in prices. In Kabul and Kandahar, where imports make up at least 40 percent of the cereal supply, wheat flour prices have gone up by 83 and 88 percent respectively in the past ten weeks. In Ghazni, prices have increased by over 100 percent, and recently no wheat at all has been available in Ghazni.

While prices in some Afghan cities initially fell at the news of the opening of the Iranian border on November 21, they began to shoot up again one week after the announcement. Iran has never been an important source of wheat for Afghanistan.

WFP also expressed concern about the food security situation in Kabul, the Central Highlands (Hazarajat), Central Ghor and Badakhshan.

UNICEF Launches *State of the World's Children 2000*

On 13 December, UNICEF launched the annual report *The State of the World's Children 2000* in Jalalabad, capital of the eastern Afghan province of Nangahar.

Over 150 men and boys, with a few international women, listened to Laiq Saeed, an 8-year-old boy who lost one leg and the fingers of one hand in a landmine accident three years ago, repeat quietly but forcefully, "We want peace, we want peace, we want peace."

The UN Regional Co-ordinating Officer noted that the basic needs of food, medicine and clothing have now become wants for millions of Afghans. He added that 35 per cent of all landmine victims in Afghanistan are children.

Mullah Abdul Kabir, Governor of Nangahar province and Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, said that Islam emphasises childcare and service to others. It specifies the importance of breast-feeding for two years, and child nutrition. He noted that equity for girls and boys is an inherent part of Islam.

The UNICEF Resident Project Officer in Jalalabad stated that in Afghanistan alone, 85,000 children die of diarrhoea every year.

A separate meeting to mark the launch of *The State of the World's Children 2000* was organised for women on 12 December in Jalalabad. About 50 Afghan females from the health and education sectors and international women from UN agencies and NGOs attended the meeting at Jalalabad University Hospital.

The Afghan women declared that their main concern for the 21st century is the future of their children, good child health services, and an effective education system to enable boys and girls to achieve their highest potential.

The women also prayed for the restoration of peace in their country so that their children could grow up as peaceful citizens in a prosperous Afghanistan.

Health

A Health Co-ordination Committee Meeting was held at Herat Regional Hospital. The meeting, which was attended by WHO, MoPH, UN agencies and NGOs, discussed the improvement of health services in the Western region.

During the last week five female physiotherapy clinics were established in the five UNDP P.E.A.C.E. Initiative districts of Farah province. Well equipped with modern tools, the clinics will assist the poorest women in Farah province. They are managed by qualified female physiotherapists, who were trained by UNOPS/CDAP last year in Kandahar.

Training

UNICEF Kabul organised a three-month basic training on midwifery skills, starting 7 December, with prior approval of the Ministry of Health. Eleven women from Logar province are participating in this course, which will be held in Malalai Hospital and supervised by the UNICEF female staff member in Kabul.

WHO conducted five-day workshop for 20 medical doctors on control, prevention, and management of complicated and non-complicated malaria cases in Kunduz province. The doctors in the workshop were taught how to properly manage malaria and how to utilise WHO guidelines during treatment.

Medical supplies

WHO provided full therapeutic requirements for 100 tuberculosis patients at Herat Regional Hospital. WHO in close collaboration with WFP distributed 14.76 MT of

food to the inpatient feeding programme in Herat Regional Hospital and 6.96 MT similar food to Herat TB Control Centre of the regional hospital. WHO also distributed anti-malarial drugs and equipment to the malaria unit of Imam Sahib District.

Education

With assistance from UNOPS/CDAP, 20 schools for girls and boys in the Kandahar region were started in November in Panjwai, Shege, and Arghandab. There are nine schools for girls, nine schools for boys, and two schools with mixed classes. These schools are fully supported by local Governors and the planning department in Kandahar and managed by the local communities with assistance from UNOPS/CDAP and UNICEF.

In Kabul, UNICEF accompanied a delegation from OCHA to visit girls' and boys' home schools in Shara-e-Naw, Deh Dena, and Kartai. In all these places, teachers were busy teaching their classes, which were quite crowded with as many as 50 students. UNICEF provided education supplies such as pocket boards and cards with the alphabet. In one of these centres children's education is followed by vocational training in carpet weaving and shoe making.

In eastern Afghanistan, UNICEF held meetings with the Directors of RRD in Kunar and Nangahar provinces to discuss the progress of home schools in these provinces.

Water/Sanitation

In Jalalabad, WFP and WHO have agreed to begin the second part of the third phase of the Jalalabad city sanitation project. The

first phase of this ongoing project took off in 1994, when WFP joined hands with an international NGO. Due to a major increase in Jalalabad's population after the influx of displaced persons from Kabul in 1994, the city's sanitation infrastructure was overwhelmed, and disease was on the rise.

WFP now works in collaboration with WHO on the sanitation project. Paid with food-for-work, labourers empty and clean existing drainage systems, dig drainage canals, clean existing culverts and construct new ones, smooth and gravel the roads, fill in waterlogged areas and increase sanitation awareness in the community. Sixty percent of the city has now been covered under the sanitation project, and 6,000 tons of wheat has been distributed as wages.

WHO supports female health educators/social mobilisers and has formed community committees to ensure that the project is sustainable.

In Maidan Shar of Wardak province, the Kuhna Khumar pipe water supply project has been completed with the technical and financial support of UNICEF.

In Gardez, five handpumps were installed on wells to provide clean water for some 2,000 people of the area.

DACAAR has completed a water supply and environmental sanitation project in Moqoor, Ghazni Province. The fifty wells and hand pumps will provide clean water to almost 1,500 families, while 150 baths and latrines will benefit 150 families. The community participated in the work and will now pay for the maintenance of the pumps via mechanics trained by DACAAR.

Agriculture

Livestock

One-week vaccination training for women in Kabul, Nangahar, and Logar provinces has concluded. Equipped with vaccination kits, the women will work as poultry vaccinators in their villages.

Animal health and production activities in 255 veterinary field units continue to operate smoothly.

Crops: Locust Control

In northern Afghanistan, FAO continued surveys of sunn pest and locust egg beds. The semi-arid desert areas of northern Afghanistan provide a natural habitat for the Moroccan locust. In 1995, FAO moved away from using insecticide to help control locust outbreaks in northern Afghanistan. Instead, FAO opted to involve farmers in the mechanical control of this damaging insect. Mechanical control (e.g. digging trenches to trap the insects) reduces the amount of environmental damage--including the numbers of poisoned livestock.

Communities have been trained on the life cycle of the locust and the identification and monitoring of locust egg beds. Since killing all the eggs is neither feasible nor environmentally desirable, when the eggs hatch, farmers dig trenches in the path of the young locusts, which cannot fly. Capturing the locusts in the trench, they bury them alive to wipe them out.

In 1999, over 21,000 farmers in northern Afghanistan received training in various kinds of plant protection. Over 4,000 farmers used mechanical locust control on some 25,000 hectares of land.

Since the inception of the mechanical locust control programme, FAO estimates that it has prevented the use of 32,000 litres of insecticide, for a total saving to farmers of US\$ 650,000.

Deforestation

A recent UNOCHA mission to the province of Kunar found that on average an estimated 100 trucks carrying timber ply the Jalalabad-Kunar-Torkham road each day. Kunar continues to be a disputed area, one reason for which is the profitable tax levied on these vehicles.

One of the most serious environmental issues in Afghanistan is deforestation. In the short decade of the 1980's, forest and woodland cover shrank from 3.4% of the total area to 2.6%. In Kunar several years ago, huge forests bordered the main road. These have been ruthlessly cut.

In June 1999, the United Nations in Afghanistan called upon the timber industry outside Afghanistan to boycott timber from Afghanistan's shrinking old growth forests.

Narcotics

During the last month three integrated pest management sub-projects were completed in UNDCP target districts of Maiwand, Ghorak and Khakrez districts of Kandahar province. Under these sub-projects 50 community-based trainers were trained and equipped with modern techniques of pest management. Upon completion of their training they received pest management kits. These 50 community-based trainers will now support the needy growers of their districts.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.343

21 December 1999

The General Assembly

The General Assembly of the United Nations has called upon all Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to immediately cease all armed hostilities, to renounce the use of force and to engage in a political dialogue under United Nations auspices aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement of the conflict by creating a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.

In particular, it urged the Taliban and other Afghan parties to refrain from all acts of violence against civilians, including women and children. It strongly condemned the sharp escalation of the conflict in 1999 and the fact that foreign military support to the Afghan parties had continued unabated through 1999.

The General Assembly noted the recent lifting of the blockade in central Afghanistan by the Taliban.

Food Security

WFP's house-to-house survey in Jalalabad, through which bakery beneficiaries will be selected, is scheduled to begin this week. The survey was previously postponed as local authorities banned the participation of female surveyors, indispensable in order to interview women. WFP has now obtained permission for female workers to conduct the survey.

Health

The United Nations Security Council has approved a humanitarian flight to transport medicine to Afghanistan for Doctors without Borders.

UN Security Council Resolution 1267 calls on the Taliban to expel Osama bin Laden to a country where he can be brought to justice. Until they do so, the resolution prohibits flights by Ariana Afghan Airlines and freezes Taliban bank accounts and other financial assets. The resolution does not prohibit humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI)

A joint WHO, UNICEF, and REMT meeting was held in Mazar-i-Sharif for preparing an EPI annual plan. According to the plan, all districts in the area have been divided into three categories: those that run an intensive programme including fixed centres, outreach and mobile teams; those that run fixed centres and an outreach programme; and those that run a programme only through fixed centres. The plan stresses refresher training and expansion of AFP surveillance and its integration into EPI in all districts.

Tuberculosis

WHO organised a meeting of all regional tuberculosis managers on the control of tu-

berculosis in Northern Afghanistan. WHO established two new tuberculosis centres in Samangan and Sheberghan Public Hospitals and distributed lab reagents and tuberculosis drugs.

WHO successfully completed a training course on tuberculosis control in Mazar-i-Sharif, which was attended by doctors, nurses, and lab technicians from Samangan and Jawzjan provinces.

Training

For compiling a health profile and health data according to the new HIS (Health Information System) formats, WHO donated computers, printers, and other related equipment to the MoPH Planning Department and the Primary Health Care Department.

WHO distributed new formats in a four-day training workshop on the implementation of the new Health Information System jointly organised by WHO, MoPH, UNICEF, SCA, AMI, and IBNESINA in Logar province for male and female doctors, nurses and health workers last week.

Medical supplies

WHO distributed medical/surgical and lab supplies to various health facilities and hospitals in central region. WHO distributed medical/surgical supplies to Uruzgon District Hospital. The WHO office in Faizabad distributed anti-tuberculosis drugs and x-ray supplies to Faizabad Hospital and anti-malaria drugs to Baharak health centres. WHO distributed anti-tuberculosis drugs to Garmser Tuberculosis Control Centre in Helmand province, MCH supplies to Adag MCH clinic and medical sup-

plies to UNCHS supported clinics in Kandahar.

Education

About 240 Afghan women staff of NGOs recently completed an eight month training course run by the Afghan NGO Coordinating Bureau (ANCB) in Peshawar. Funded through UNOCHA, the courses included accounting, management, secretarial and computer training.

Water/Sanitation

DACAAR has completed a water supply and environmental sanitation project in Awband, Ghazni Province. The fifty-one wells and hand pumps will provide clean water to 1,400 families, while 138 baths and latrines will benefit 138 families. The community participated in the work and will now pay for the maintenance of the pumps via mechanics trained by DACAAR.

Disability

In honour of the International Day of the Disabled, the NGO AABRAR held bicycle and wheelchair races for disabled Afghans on 5 December in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. 128 disabled cyclists participated, including children as young as seven years old, from twelve provinces of Afghanistan and from refugee camps in Pakistan.

UNICEF and ICRC sponsored prizes, with first prize being a Chinese bicycle, second a sewing machine and third a wall clock. The longest race was twenty-five kilometres and the shortest five kilometres. In all, eighteen participants won prizes during the races, which thousands of spectators enjoyed.

Agriculture

Crops: Hazarajat

Food security in Hazarajat has been eroded by the continuing civil war and became critical by autumn 1997. A wheat deficit area, the region relies on imports of cereals from other parts of the country, financed by the sale of livestock and potatoes.

FAO is working towards improving food security in the area using locally produced improved wheat seed. In 1997, FAO distributed 1.4 metric tonnes of improved seed on credit to 78 farmers in Yakawlang, a more accessible area of Hazarajat. The seed multiplication programme has now moved into more remote areas such as Uruzgon and Ghor. Using WFP food grain to pay farmers for contributing their improved seed, FAO has redistributed the seed in order to produce more improved seed in the next harvest.

Recently, FAO distributed improved wheat seed and fertiliser among almost 3,000 farmers in six districts of Hazarajat. The potential yield of improved seed from this crop in the year 2000 is 3,200 metric tonnes. By planting in autumn rather than spring, farmers can avoid crop loss caused by spring droughts.

Since farmers are aware of the high yields, the improved seed is in great demand. The programme represents a significant step in alleviating local food shortages.

A New Afghan Magazine

Tadbeer, meaning *Thoughtfulness*, is the name of a new quarterly magazine from Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. It is published in mixed Dari and Pashto. The

magazine is open to anyone who feels that he or she has an interesting story or useful experience to share.

The first volume includes reports, articles about SCA's history since 1980, a gender study, school reports, a medical article, poems, short stories and other articles. From the next volume, the magazine will mainly consist of articles about activities inside Afghanistan.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

12/1-00

Issue No.344

04 January 2000

Hijacked Indian Plane in Kandahar

Following the landing of a hijacked Indian Airlines plane in the Kandahar airport on Sunday 26th December 1999, a three-member UN team, headed by Mr Erick de Mul, the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan flew to Kandahar to help end the crisis.

Besides provision of humanitarian assistance, the UN was also providing communication and medical facilities to the passengers.

The plane left Afghan territory on 31 December '99.

Health

The second round of the National Immunization Days (NIDs), which was postponed due to security problems in Jurm, Baharak and Wardoje districts of Badakhshan has been completed.

WHO team transported pipes and fittings for the construction of Faizabad Water Supply (phase II) and flood protection projects, and facilitated regular monthly Health Co-ordination Committee meetings, attended by UN agencies and health NGOs in Ghazni, Kandahar, Kunduz and surrounding areas.

Training

WHO in close collaboration with the ARCS is undertaking ARI control/management and training courses for female and male doctors and Traditional Birth Attendants

(TBAs) in Mazar, Ghazni and Gardez (Paktia) provinces to accelerate the activities of the AFP surveillance system.

MoPH and WHO are to prepare a one-week training course on Safe Motherhood for 25 female health personnel from various health facilities in Kandahar. WHO provided training materials to the newly established library of the Southern Regional Public Health Department, and has developed simple guidelines for surveying certain diseases in local languages for field staff in Herat.

Senior Health Trainers conducted a two-week training course for 6 trainers from Provincial EPI Management Team (PEMT) in Badakhshan and EPI section of SCA Takhar.

WHO organized a one-day training workshop on Safe Motherhood Needs Assessment in WHO support office in Islamabad for WHO National Health Coordinators from Northern, Southern and Western regions.

Missions

WHO team visited Jaghato, Maqor, Gardez and Zurmat districts in Ghazni and Paktia provinces and monitored the AFP Surveillance System and EPI programmes.

A joint mission of WHO, UN agencies and NGOs paid a visit to Hairatan border to assess the situation to co-operate with the inhabitants of that area.

Various meetings were held on loan beneficiaries and Village Development

Committee and Technical Support Team of the Basic Development Needs (BDN) program in Guzzarah. Karokh and Enjeel districts of Herat province to improve the WHO-initiated BDN programme in the Western region.

Medical supplies

WHO provided medical and non-medical supplies to some clinics and hospitals in Herat, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Baghlan, Ghazni, Kandahar and Zabul, Fariyab and Paktika provinces.

Health/Education

The Multi Activity Rural Rehabilitation Foundation (MARUF) completed short term Health Education programmes including mine awareness, targeting 1,000 families in Jalalabad, Kunduz and IDPs in the ex-Soviet Union embassy (Kabul). The project was funded by Trans' ART.

Water/Sanitation

The MARUF NGO completed a water supply project in District 16 of Kabul benefiting 750 families. 30 hand-dug shallow wells, equipped with handpumps, have been improved under the project, supported by Canada Fund through Care International.

Over 70 wells (equipped with hand-pumps) were dug and 600 baths and latrines built under Water and Environmental Sanitation projects, carried out by the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) in Ghazni. The project benefited 1,700 families in the area.

Agriculture

Crops

FAO is working towards improving food security in various regions using locally produced improved wheat seed. Fruit seeds were also distributed among private nursery growers for further sustainability of horticulture programmes in a number of districts in Ghazni, Kabul, Logar and Nangrahar provinces.

The seed multiplication programme is ongoing in more remote areas such as Uruzgan and Ghor.

Recently, FAO irrigated wheat research trials and wheat multiplication plots in Mazar, Taloqan and Jalalabad, and completed all preliminary small-scale irrigation sub-projects in the eastern region.

Livestock

FAO Livestock carried out urea-straw treatment demonstration in 66 villages, conducted a six-month house-to-house training for 100 families, and is monitoring poultry forms in Dand and Arghandab districts of Kandahar. Another training course for 13 veterinarians on Animal Health and Production Improvement Module was also carried out in the region.

Anthrax and Sheep Pox vaccines were distributed among various veterinary field units of the southern region. In addition, 2,400 kg of mineral powder was sent to Jalalabad for further distribution among farmers.

Nearly 1,000 animals were examined before slaughtering by responsible veterinarians in Kandahar.

Afghanistan Outlook

The 2nd issue of Afghanistan Outlook, a bi-annual publication by the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan, United Special Mission for Afghanistan (UNSMIA) and the World Bank is ready for distribution.

As a collection of analytical reports, the Afghanistan Outlook attempts to enhance the understanding of the in-country crisis context.

Copies are available in the UN Afghanistan Office. Interested readers can contact:

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E-mail <ariana@unndafg.org.pk>

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Assistance for Afghanistan

20/1-2000

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.345

12 January 2000

Afghanistan Support Group

On 9 December 1999, at the meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) in Ot6tawa, Switzerland accepted the chair of the ASG from Canada. The ASG is a group of countries which work together to provide international support for Afghanistan. The Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) will be responsible for the leadership of the ASG.

The ASG was founded by the sixteen largest donor countries to Afghanistan as a complement to the efforts of the UN. Switzerland joined the ASG in 1998. Today, ASG members channel most of the aid from individual countries to Afghanistan. The Group works intensively with various UN organisations as well as with multilateral aid organisations active in Afghanistan.

Rustaq Earthquake

On 31 December 1999 at 09:45, four earthquakes struck Rustaq and surrounding districts in northern Afghanistan. Six villages in Rustaq district of Takhar province were affected. There were no casualties, and assessment shows that damages have been relatively limited.

Approximately 300 houses and 150 stables have been either damaged or destroyed in six villages. Since springs in two areas were affected, lack of water supply is a problem. In addition, in the village of Sar-e-Joy, the quake widened a crack on the

top of a hill, which has increased the threat of landslides for the villagers.

Displaced Persons

Panjshir/Gulbohar

Recent hostilities in the area of Gulbohar are likely to affect the return of displaced families to their homes in the area, or efforts at reconstruction of war-related damage. In the light of continued reports of civilian movements in and out of the area south of the front-line, discussions have been held with the authorities in Kabul this week, with a view to obtaining a more formal general agreement for the resettlement of families displaced to Kabul. In the meantime, efforts are under way to systematically establish from community representatives the extent of damage to homes and agricultural infrastructure in this area, as the basis for planning future rehabilitation programmes for returning rural communities.

Discussions are also under way regarding the resumption of cross-line convoys, to transport food and non-food supplies from Kabul to the Panjshir valley and areas north of the front-line.

A summary of non-food items distributed to date to displaced families in Panjshir/Gulbohar has been compiled. When consolidated with existing records of non-food stocks in Kabul and the estimated pipeline, it is hoped that this exercise might facilitate planning of future responses to

needs of the IDPs in the area, and ensure that priority needs can be met in a timely manner.

Kabul

Efforts continue to identify and assist vulnerable IDP families from within the displaced community within the city, as part of an ongoing (ECHO-funded) initiative being implemented by GAA and MEDAIR. The aim is to assist some 4,000 vulnerable families through the provision of employment (in labour-intensive public works programmes) and about 440 families (female or disabled-headed) through support for home-based production.

UNCHS Habitat has also embarked on a programme of relief distributions to some 2,500 vulnerable and displaced families in the city, implemented through established community forums.

In the ex-Soviet Embassy, a range of assistance continues to be provided to the inhabitants of the compound, who now number almost 3,000 families. Those who have recently entered the compound are reportedly families who had initially settled with relatives, who now find it impossible to support them in their homes. This re-displacement within the city is a process that had been anticipated by agencies, and highlights the importance of reaching the most vulnerable families living outside of the Embassy compound, as soon as possible.

In order to meet the immediate needs of the "new arrivals" in the compound, an additional 700 packages of non-food relief were made available from the UN/NGO pool, and distributed in the compound during the week.

In response to the growing compound population, CARE report that additional latrines will need to be built, if sufficient resources can be found.

Educational activities for the children living on the compound, implemented by Save the Children (US) are ongoing, with up to 20 classes taking place daily.

Health

Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI)

WHO reports a marked increase in the incidence of acute respiratory infections (ARI) throughout the country, with some 30% of outpatients reportedly suffering from respiratory ailments. Twenty five percent of all deaths of children under five years old are due to ARI.

In collaboration with the MoPH, WHO has conducted three three-day ARI training courses for female and male doctors in Rabia Balkhi and Miwand hospitals in Kabul City respectively. 65 medical doctors and mid-level health personnel have been trained. WHO also successfully completed ARI training for 35 medical doctors and nurses in Balkh, Samangan, Jowzjan, and Saripul provinces and for 30 doctors and health workers from Kunduz and Baghlan. They will conduct training courses for community health workers on prevention, control, proper treatment, and management of ARI cases.

WHO/WFP Collaborate

In Ghazni, WHO and WFP discussed joint WHO/WFP projects in year 2000. WFP will collaborate with tuberculosis, SMI (Safe Motherhood Initiative) and BDN (Ba-

sic Development Needs) programmes in southeastern region.

In Faizabad, WHO and WFP discussed the continuation of food aid for 770 TB patients. WFP in 1999 prepared supplementary food aid such as wheat, edible oil, sugar, rice and beans to WHO supported TB centres in Faizabad, Baharak and Jurm

Education

The Afghan Publishing House of the BBC Afghan Education Project, with UNESCO's financial support, has recently published another illustrated storybook for Afghan children. "The Treasure," a famous Afghan folk tale, conveys the vital message that 'hard work reaps many benefits'.

The story is popular among Afghan communities all over Afghanistan. Published in both Dari and Pashto, the book can be obtained from BBC Afghan Education Projects in Peshawar.

Agriculture

FAO provided training in backyard poultry keeping in Dand district of Kandahar province. In addition, FAO sponsored a training course for 54 veterinarians in animal health and production improvement in Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, and Khost regions.

Routine animal health and production activities in 255 districts inside Afghanistan continued.

Returnees

UNHCR support for shelter for returnee families continues, with 910 families benefiting in Kabul and Logar provinces, where

construction work is about 80% complete. UNHCR has also extended support to AREA for a rehabilitation project in Kabul, and to IRC to undertake primary education. There are plans to resume support for a revolving fund project for returnees.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.346

18 January 2000

Assistant Secretary General for UN-SMA

The Secretary-General has appointed Mr. Francesc Vendrell as his Personal Representative and Head of the Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. The appointment will take effect on 1 February.

Mr. Vendrell joined the UN in 1968 and has held a variety of posts related to political affairs and international law. He is currently the Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Vendrell, from Spain, has been the Deputy Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central American Peace Process from 1989 to 1991. He also represented the Secretary-General during the first phase of the Guatemala peace negotiations from 1990 to 1992.

During Mr. Vendrell's tenure at the United Nations, he has been Visiting Professor at the Yale Law School, in 1977 and 1979, and at Rutgers Law School from 1972 to 1974, and Director of Studies at The Hague Academy of International Law in 1979. Before joining the United Nations, he was Lecturer in Constitutional Law at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Food aid/Food security

Since the beginning of the year, WFP has approved five projects: A six month food-for-work winter relief for 2,200 of Kabul's

vulnerable population using 1,918 MT of wheat; a food-for-work water supply project in Logar and Wardak provinces for 82 daily wage labourers using 33 MT of wheat; a "soup kitchen" for 10,000 food recipients in Kabul city with 232 MT of food for four months; and a food-for-work municipal infrastructure/neighbourhood action programme for Farah city with 132 daily wage labourers using 144 MT of wheat. In addition, 7,500 MT of wheat will be available for the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan, in collaboration with UNHCR.

Southeastern Afghanistan

WFP has approved an emergency food distribution for ten districts in the provinces of Kandahar, Zabul, and Helmand. A total of 28,649 households (about 200,000 people) are expected to receive 200kg of wheat and 25kg of Corn Soya Blend over the next four months for a total of 5,792 MT of wheat and 716 MT of CSB. The decrease in the 1999 cereal harvest, due to dry weather conditions, the decrease in wheat crossing the border from Pakistan and the subsequent increase in wheat flour prices have necessitated this food assistance.

A house-to-house survey in Kandahar City is underway. The survey will identify 15,500 of the most vulnerable households. A total of 28 women and 26 men have been trained in order to conduct the survey. WFP was able to begin distributing ration cards to beneficiaries on 16 January.

Two Afghan women have been identified as program assistants to enhance WFP's gender program for the region. Their selection was finalised last week.

Health

Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) has started an emergency preparedness and response intervention in the Infectious Disease Ward (IDW) in Mirwais hospital, Kandahar City. The first goal is the rehabilitation of the sewerage system, septic tanks, toilets and showers of the IDW, which is expected to be complete by the end of January.

Water/Sanitation

This week the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan will send 20 trucks across the Afghan-Pakistan border at Torkham with 500 metric tonnes of cement. SCA is planning to construct 1200 water wells in Afghanistan this year. This shipment of cement will be used for the construction of about 840 water wells in the eastern and southeastern regions.

Education

Six trucks, each carrying ten tonnes of textbooks and stationery for schools supported by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), have left Peshawar for Jalalabad and Ghazni. Each year SCA sends about 80 tonnes of textbooks and stationery to 580 schools and 170,000 students in 18 provinces in Afghanistan.

The Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Program CDAP/UNOPS runs a community based education program in Kandahar and Farah in close collaboration with UNICEF. The program which estab-

lished and supports 44 community based schools for girls and boys, was jointly monitored and evaluated by CDAP/UNOPS, the local community and local authorities for the first time.

Disability: Direct Program Implementation by CDAP

Working toward a more cost-effective and sustainable community based rehabilitation (CBR) program, CDAP/UNOPS has started direct implementation of its CBR program in southern and southwest Afghanistan. The program will be mainly run and managed by local trained CBR staff in close cooperation with Community Based Rehabilitation Committees (CBRCs) and local Disabled People Organisations. (DPOs) established and trained during the past few years.

Agriculture

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Crops Programme for Afghanistan has just released its six month report on seed activities in Afghanistan.

The report notes that in 1999 over 5,543 Afghan farmers were registered for seed production countrywide.

Highlighting the summer and winter crop national seed programmes, the report said that participating farmers produced over 4,700 metric tonnes of improved seed. After being tested and treated, the seeds are distributed to farmers all over the country.

Narcotics

In Kandahar, UNDCP has finalised six agricultural sub-project proposals. The new sub-projects will focus on orchard estab-

lishment and an integrated pest management programme for the UNDCP target districts on 70 hectares of agricultural land previously under opium poppy. In each of the three target districts, an agro-chemical store will be established which will enable the growers to have easy access to required agro-chemicals and equipment.

The infrastructure section of UNDCP Kandahar recently began rehabilitating fourteen karezes in the target districts. The rehabilitation of these structures will greatly enhance the availability of the irrigation water and bring more agricultural lands under the cultivation of licit crops.

The UNDCP Afghan female community mobiliser visited five villages in the target district of Maiwand and continued her routine meetings with female family members. She had discussions in the areas to explain the objectives of UNDCP and raise awareness concerning the hazardous effects of drugs, health, education, family problems, and children.

Publications

The latest issue of Afghanistan Outlook has now been issued by e-mail. It is also available on the website of the Afghanistan assistance community at www.pcpafg.org.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

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WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.347

25 January 2000

Funding

The government of Denmark has contributed \$347,500 to the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan.

The Department for International Development (DFID) has given a grant of £700,000 for UN and NGO refugee assistance programmes for refugees in Iran. The funds are earmarked for UNICEF, UNFPA, International Consortium for Refugees in Iran, Iraqi Refugee Aid Council, and Ockenden International.

DFID has also pledged one million pounds to ICRC's emergency appeal for Afghanistan for 1999.

UNICEF Official Due Soon

UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, Mr Nigel Fisher, is scheduled to visit Afghanistan (Kabul and Mazar) from 13-17 February.

Based in Kathmandu, Mr Fisher is the most senior UNICEF official to visit Afghanistan since UNICEF's Executive Director's visit in March 1998. He has also been scheduled to meet with the Afghan Ambassador in Islamabad.

Displaced Persons: Kabul

Education and recreational facilities for displaced children in Kabul continue to expand. As reported in *Weekly Update* 342 (14 December 1999), Save the Children-

US, Children in Crisis, CARE and UNICEF have collaborated to improve the situation of these displaced children. About 2,300 displaced children are enrolled in grades 1 to 3, with more still joining. Thirty teachers work with these children in two shifts. Most of the classes take place in the ex-Soviet compound, with four in nearby mosques.

So far, 4,600 notebooks, 30 blackboards, 2,300 small wooden slate boards, 2,300 pencils, 2,300 pencil sharpeners, 2,300 erasers, 2,300 bamboo pens, 2,300 pieces of white chalk, 30 rulers and 30 abacuses have been provided.

302 girls older than grade 3 have been registered and grouped into 36 groups. Of these, five groups do beadwork; seven groups receive training in embroidery and 24 groups in knitting.

On the recreational side, two volleyball fields and two football fields have been established in the compound of the ex-Soviet embassy. Activities are supported by six trainers. T-shirts were provided for children who are members of the football and volleyball teams.

Two new playgrounds now serve over 2,000 children from two to five years of age, of whom about 47 per cent are girls.

Food aid/Food security

Registration of beneficiaries for WFP's emergency food distribution in the Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabol is continuing. So far, 4,900 beneficiary

cards have been distributed, out of which the female team has given 1,200 to widows. Six groups in Kandahar City, four groups in Dand and six in Lashkargah do the registration. WFP also recruited five female registrars in Lashkargah City, who are going to identify 600 widows there.

Registration in Kandahar is expected to be completed by the end of January.

Health

Disease outbreak

An outbreak of an unknown disease has occurred in Darra Souf district of Samangan province. Five villages were initially affected, Darwaz Bala, Darwaz Payan, Qala Nau, Qala Kona and Sheikhabad with a total population of 1,625 persons. These villages reported 50 deaths on 5 January 2000. The local population believes the disease may be measles.

Deaths are increasing. The epidemic has spread to neighbouring villages, but there are no mortality or population figures for the later infected area. The disease has affected people between 1-25 years old. The symptoms are vomiting and diarrhoea, swelling of the head and face, red spots on the head, neck, and under the skin and high fever for four to six days.

There are no medical facilities or doctors in the area and no treatment has been undertaken. The community and authorities in Darra Souf have requested the UN to arrange an appropriate response.

Immunisation

With UNICEF's assistance, in 53 immunisation centres in 33 districts of western Afghanistan 4,000 children under one year of age received DPT and polio vaccines. This will help them develop immunity against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and poliomyelitis. 2,026 children under one year of age were vaccinated for BCG (tuberculosis). 3,673 women were vaccinated against tetanus.

Training

WHO, UNICEF, SCF (US), and IFRC attended a meeting with the MoPH team on a proposed public health and management course for MoPH staff. WHO strongly requested the involvement of Kabul Medical Faculty in order to involve the University more actively in postgraduate education. The participants agreed that MoPH should conduct the course in close collaboration with the Medical Faculty. WHO agreed to support the course technically and will share the cost.

In the next meeting, the MoPH and Ministry of Higher Education will discuss the draft curriculum and other related issues. The meeting formed a four-member task force consisting of WHO, MoPH, and UNICEF representatives to work on the curriculum.

In Kandahar, WHO conducted two training courses on acute respiratory infections (ARI) in Kandahar. Twenty-six men and twenty women from Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, and Nimroz provinces attended the courses.

Medical supplies

WHO distributed medical supplies to Herat Regional Hospital to be distributed to all health facilities in Western region.

Water/Sanitation

With assistance from UNICEF, ten dug wells have been made ready for installation of hand pumps in Laman district of Badghis province. These will provide safe drinking water to 2,500 people. Twenty sanitary latrines have also been constructed for families of Laman District. Hygiene education by the RRD's social mobilisers continues in this district.

Education

Three professors from the Swedish University of Karlstad have visited Peshawar for a week, training Afghan school consultants in teaching methodology. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan employs the fifty-six school consultants, out of whom seven are female. They work inside Afghanistan, teaching and supervising the 5,800 teachers at 580 Swedish Committee supported schools with 170,000 students.

The school consultants attended a two week long seminar in Hayatabad as a part of a two-year course for improving teaching techniques. Eight seminars and workshops, with distance-courses in between, are planned. The course deals with theories of child development, learning processes, and different teaching models. Next fall, it will end with a review of the Swedish Committee Teacher Training Programme. The course is planned and managed by the Educational Technical Support Unit at the SCA Main Office in Peshawar.

Community Fora

In southern Afghanistan, one more Community Forum for Women was established in district 1 of Kandahar City, and two Women's Community Fora were established in Farah City.

UNICEF and WHO contributed medicine and medical equipment to the health clinics of Community Fora in districts 3 and 4 of Kandahar, while the Community Forum district 5 obtained permission for establishing a health clinic in the forum.

There are six boys' primary schools with 750 students and two girls' primary schools with 80 students in the Community Fora in various districts of Kandahar City. CDAP has contributed textbooks and school supplies to these schools.

Disability

Guardians, an implementing partner with CDAP, has released its 1999 *Statistical Report*. The Guardians Institute of Orthopaedics in Kandahar is the sole provider of orthopaedic and physiotherapy services to the disabled in southern region. During 1999, Guardians has offered consultations to over 6,600 patients. The major causes for patient visits were trauma, spinal injury, and polio.

Guardians also provides training in physiotherapy to male and female staff of other agencies.

Agriculture

FAO Livestock

In southern Afghanistan, a cattle feed specialist carried out urea-straw treatment demonstrations for 75 farmers in various

villages of Dand, Daman and Arghandab PEACE Initiative districts of Kandahar province. Fodder crop staff provided 1,025 kilos of urea for improved winter fodder crop experimental plots in four PEACE Initiative districts of Kandahar region.

A training course for 54 veterinarians on animal health and production improvement was completed in Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar and Khost regions.

In eastern Afghanistan, five village women recruited and newly trained in vaccination techniques in Surkhrud district worked in poultry vaccination.

Routine animal health and production activities are going on smoothly in 255 districts inside Afghanistan.

FAO Crops

During the last week, FAO Crops monitored nucleus nurseries in Herat Province.

During the years of conflict, many Afghan farmers fled their lands, abandoning their orchards, which were often either destroyed or looted. Consequently, much important genetic material may have been lost forever.

As part of an effort to preserve what remains of Afghanistan's genetic heritage, each region of the country is being surveyed for fruit germplasm, which is collected and conserved in nucleus fruit tree nurseries, six of which have been established.

In addition to conserving Afghanistan's genetic resources, the centres are used to propagate plant supplies for private nurseries and as training centres.

More than 120 varieties of pome and stone fruits and 14 varieties of grapes have been conserved through this pro-

gramme. Further financial support is now being sought.

Refugees/Returnees

Voluntary Return

From 17-21 January 2000, 48 families (297 individuals) returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan. In addition, 3,422 individuals spontaneously returned from Iran at the border at Islam Qala.

Forcible Return

During the week, 536 Afghans (seven families with thirty-three members and 503 singles without their families) have been deported from Iran through Islam Qala border crossing point. Out of these deportees, 100 individuals had no documents at all.

Reintegration Assistance

In Herat province, three shelter projects for 394 families have been completed during the last week.

4,144 concrete beams for shelter projects have been safely transported to project sites in Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabul for distribution to beneficiaries.

Nine tube wells implemented by DACAAR under a sub-agreement with UNHCR have been handed over to the community in Maiwand district of Kandahar. 178 families who had recently returned from Pakistan will benefit from this completed project.

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WEEKLY UPDATE

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Issue No.348

1 February 2000

Andrew Tesoriere to Depart

Andrew Tesoriere, the acting head of UN-SMA, will depart on 8 February after eighteen months of service. He hopes to return to work for Afghanistan's welfare as he has been doing periodically over the past twenty-four years. He extends his best wishes to all those with whom he has had the honour to work towards seeking an end to the fighting in Afghanistan and the start of talking, leading to an equitable and durable peace.

He recalls in particular the positive intra-Afghan peace talks in Ashkabad in February and March 1999, which he facilitated, and hopes that the two Afghan factions will soon find the ways and means to resume such constructive dialogue.

Francesc Vendrell, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General and the new Head of UNSMA, is scheduled to arrive this week.

Mission

A mission of representatives from the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) has arrived in Islamabad and will be visiting Afghanistan. Switzerland is the chair of the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) for the year 2000.

Food aid/Food security

A convoy of food and non-food items is scheduled to leave Kabul for the Panjshir

Valley this week. At least 15 MT of wheat from the World Food Programme is included in the shipment. More food and non-food supplies are expected to reach the valley in the coming weeks. The convoy will also include one international staff member from WFP.

The WFP emergency distribution in Ghor province is ongoing. As of 23 January, 146 MT of wheat had been distributed to approximately 3,000 families in the districts of Cheghcharan, Shahrak, and Tulak. 712 MT of wheat has been approved.

The emergency distribution in Khoja Gar in Takhar province is ongoing. To date 239 MT of wheat has been distributed to 4,896 families. 979 MT of wheat and 300 MT of CSB were approved for distribution by WFP.

The WFP emergency distribution in Kandahar province, covering 10 districts is expected to begin this week. 5,729 MT of wheat and 716 MT of CSB have been approved for distribution to 28,645 families.

Health

Disease outbreak

Afghan doctors in Darra Souf district of Samangan Province have now identified the unknown disease reported last week as measles. Oxfam has confirmed this information. So far fifty deaths have occurred, partly due to complications such as pneumonia.

Agriculture

FAO Livestock

In Kabul and Nangahar provinces, women veterinarians carried out urea-straw treatment demonstrations for 160 women farmers in various villages.

FAO Livestock's women's programme began in May 1995 with one woman Afghan veterinarian. In 1997, FAO began recruiting more women veterinarians, who were taught participatory methods. In spite of difficult conditions, the vets manage to work in five districts of Kabul, Nangahar, and Herat.

In addition to seventeen women veterinarians, FAO has trained forty-eight women basic veterinary workers and over 2,700 village women. The female vets are trained in general animal health, production, and husbandry. They also assist in poultry vaccination campaigns (particularly against Newcastle disease).

FAO Crops

In southern Afghanistan, data gathering on seven wheat experimental trials was completed.

As part of its crop improvement programme for Afghanistan, FAO is testing varieties of wheat, rice, barley, maize, and legumes.

In 1997-98, 941 wheat genotypes were tested inside Afghanistan, out of which the best 174 were selected for further testing in the 1998-99 crop year. These trials help FAO to determine which strains of wheat are resistant to disease and suited to growing conditions in various parts of the country.

Once the best genotypes are identified, they are released and recommended to farmers. FAO has found that certain varieties tested for growth under irrigated conditions out-perform other varieties significantly and are resistant to disease such as stripe rust.

Since 50% of the arable land in Afghanistan is not irrigated, FAO has also developed varieties of wheat that can tolerate water stress. The varieties released to farmers in this programme produce yields similar to the national average yield for rainfed wheat.

Narcotics

In Ghorak district, one of UNDCP's three pilot poppy reduction districts in southern Afghanistan, UNDCP recently completed the construction of a health clinic. WHO has agreed to provide basic health equipment and medicine whereas Ibn-e -Sina (an NGO) agreed to provide health personnel for the clinic.

The UNDCP female community mobiliser (FCM) trained forty-two women in the three districts on drug awareness, basic health, sanitation, and UNDCP activities in the districts.

Technical agriculture training was conducted in these districts for a group of fifty-seven farmers, who learned about fertiliser application, irrigation, weeding, and pest and disease management.

In addition, protection work on the karez irrigation system of Maiwand district was completed. The work included four spur dikes, gabon work, and a wash-culvert construction.