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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.315

31 May 1999

Mission to Herat

A group of nine international staff went to Herat on 30 May. Agencies sending staff were the Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, Habitat, WFP, IOM, UNHCR, and WHO. As in Kabul, international staff are now expected to maintain a continuous presence in the area.

Donor Mission

The Office of the Co-ordinator facilitated a joint donor mission from the embassies of Switzerland, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands in Islamabad to Kabul from 23rd to 25th May. The mission held meetings with officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and NGOs, ICRC and IFRC in Kabul. They visited a number of humanitarian projects implemented by UN agencies and other partner organisations.

UN Co-ordinator in Kabul

The UN Co-ordinator visited Kabul from 23rd to 27th May, where he met with local authorities and UN staff on a number of issues. He also opened the one-day disaster management workshop attended by over 35 representatives of UN agencies, NGOs, ICRC and IFRC on 24th May. The workshop was a follow up on the disaster management workshop held in Dushanbe earlier this spring. The concerned agencies in central region are in the process of devel-

oping disaster contingency planning for Central Region.

Food Aid

WFP has now dispatched two 600-ton convoys of food from Kabul for the emergency-feeding program in Panjao and Waras districts of Bamiyan Province. Working in collaboration with Oxfam, thirteen WFP national staff have been re-deployed from Faizabad, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Kabul. In addition to targeting the landless and female-headed households, WFP is also assisting the displaced in Panjao.

Health/Education

Immunisation

Over 3.6 million children under five received the oral polio vaccine during the first round of National Immunisation Days conducted from 9th to 11th May in Afghanistan. Initial reports confirm a good turnout during the first round. The target population of under-five children in Afghanistan is estimated to be around 4.34 million.

These results are partial, as activities are still taking place in areas such as Badakhshan, Helmand, Parwan, Kapisa, Kabul, Ghor and Wardak. Results are expected from these locations later.

UNICEF and WHO in collaboration with MoPHs and NGOs participated in the countrywide implementation. Although efforts were made in advance to persuade the

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warring factions to provide a window of peace during NIDS, fighting continued in some locations. This prevented supplies from reaching a few districts in the central and northeast regions. All possible resources are being used to explore ways to send supplies to these districts before the second round of NIDs, which will be from 13th to 15th June. Efforts are continuing to obtain agreement from all factions to provide a window of peace during the second round.

In Faizabad WHO organised a meeting to evaluate the NIDs first round on 27th May. MSF, SCA, and MoPH attended the meeting. The meeting also discussed other issues such as measles vaccination in Zebak District to be implemented by MSF, monitoring of the first round of NIDs in Darwaz, and establishment of a new TB control center in Kishen District.

Cirrhosis Update

A briefing by an official of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to UN agencies and NGOs disclosed that one of the ten patients brought to Herat from Gulran District has died. Thirty more cases have been reported, bringing the total to 160. Most are malnourished. One group of doctors along with medicines and supplies (donated by UNICEF and WHO) has left for the affected area. Leaflets on the causes and prevention from the disease have been dispatched to the area. The MoPH has requested UNICEF/WHO to send international specialists to the area to assess the situation.

Medical Supplies

WHO provided medical supplies to eight district health centres in Kandahar Province, medical and surgical supplies and furniture to Nimroz Provincial Hospital. In the eastern region, WHO distributed medical supplies to four clinics and three hospitals and distributed WFP's food ration to 72 TB patients. WHO also distributed supplies to Ghazni, Paktia, and Kunduz Provinces.

Health/Education Training

In collaboration with UNICEF, Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) health educators provided some 200 people with messages on health and hygiene, the dangers of early marriages and pregnancies, and the benefits of breast-feeding.

In Jalalabad, WHO in collaboration with the MoPH, the municipality and FAO, conducted an anti-rabies campaign.

Safe Water/Sanitation

In UNICEF's water and environmental sanitation programme (WES), 60 dug wells were completed in Momandar and Narang Districts of Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. Fifty of them have been equipped with hand-pumps and chlorinated. These will benefit some 15,000 people.

The Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) reported the completion of 192 household latrines in Narang District. These have been constructed by communities under the supervision of RRD and with the technical and financial support of UNICEF.

Minimum Learning Levels

The Minimum Learning Level (MLL) workshop, organised for NGOs and Ministry of Education staff by SCF-US and UNICEF, concluded on 20th May. Manuals with standards and tools to measure student learning will be finalised in June.

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Post-Quake Assistance

In Central Afghanistan, work continues on a joint rehabilitation programme for some 8,000 families in the provinces of Wardak and Logar who lost their homes in February's earthquake. The overall aim is to assist these families in re-building basic shelter before the next winter, in a manner that will provide greater safety in case of further seismic activity in the areas. The programme will also offer training to both builders and householders in the affected area in improved construction techniques using available materials. Agencies involved in the programme agreed at a meeting in Kabul this week on geographic priorities and on criteria for rehabilitation assistance to affected families. Support for the rebuilding of some 5,000 homes (implemented by CARE and GAA) has been secured from ECHO. Efforts continue to raise funds to support the remaining 3,000 families who will need to start re-building soon if they are to remain in their villages during the winter. Regular co-ordination meetings will continue to be held with agencies during the implementation of the rehabilitation programme.

UNCHS continued support to urban communities in Kabul, which included community-based education, income gen-

eration, sanitation programme, and electrification of one hospital, and shelter rehabilitation projects in various districts of Kabul. In the future Habitat plans to implement a hospital road repair project for Kabul, which has already been approved.

DACCAR has completed work on the reconstruction of Malik Yar-e-Holak High School in Khogyani, Nangahar Province. DANIDA provided the funding. Eleven classrooms, three offices and latrines were re-built. This high school for boys was destroyed in fighting, while the girls' school was undamaged. The boys' branch has approximately 900 students in two shifts, and the girls' school has 152 students. The local community contributed in clearing the site and demolishing the previous foundation, while local authorities provided cash for rebuilding part of the walls. DACCAR provides reconstruction assistance for schools if boys and girls are allowed to receive education.

Agriculture

Livestock

A survey began in Behsood District of Nangarhar Province to evaluate the need for training village women in backyard poultry production.

Bakher Animal Health and Livestock Co-operative (BALCO) has established a new center for the sale of milk in Kandahar city near Simano Bridge. BALCO collects, processes, and helps market over 7,000 litres of milk per week in Kandahar.

Crops

In western Afghanistan, FAO trained over 200 farmers in Kushk, Enjil, and Gulran districts of Herat Province in plant protection.

Mine Action

In Kabul, the Dawa and Jihad University, which was contaminated by UXOs due to an explosion a few months back, was rechecked. Over 400 dangerous items were found and destroyed by explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams. Improper storage of artillery caused the explosion.

Repatriation

Two hundred and eighty Afghan refugee families returned from Hangu and Thall camps in Pakistan to Logar and Paktia Provinces. Reports indicated that schools are operational in Azro and around 1000 boys and girls are attending the schools.

From Balochistan, 114 families (576 individuals) returned this week. Most were headed for Balkh and Jowzjan Provinces. They received the UNHCR repatriation package and food aid from WFP. In addition, 35 families and over 900 individuals returned from Iran to Nimroz Province.

The planned voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Iran through Herat is expected to begin on June 19. The first group of 1476 refugees will be repatriated in five convoys from 19th to 22nd June. Most of these returnees are Pashtun and have lived in Iran for over twelve years. All applicants were interviewed by UNHCR to ensure the voluntariness of the return. Half of the returnees are under 14 years old. They wish to return to Saripul and Sang-

Cherak districts in Jowzjan Province. Through IOM, UNHCR will arrange transport for these and subsequent returnees from Herat to their homes. WFP will provide food assistance (300 kg/family) and UNOCHA will provide mine awareness training on the Iranian side of the border.

Training Courses

The first round of refresher training courses sponsored by ANCB has been completed, and the second has begun. The courses are targeted at a total of 250 staff members of female NGOs, who are being trained in management, accounting, secretarial, and computer skills. The project is funded by the United States through the Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan.

Publications

The first issue of *Afghanistan Outlook* was published last week. First in a series of bi-annual analytical reports on Afghanistan, the *Outlook* represents a joint effort of the Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, UNSMA, and the World Bank. The report offers information on the political/military context, the Afghan economy, human rights, the humanitarian situation, and a special focus article on the plight of the disabled. Hard and soft copies are available from the Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan.

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan has issued a booklet entitled *Afghanistan, Aid and the Taliban: Challenges on the eve of the 21st century*. (Stockholm 1999). The book includes papers by international specialists on Afghanistan, Islam and the Taliban and is the result of a conference in Stockholm in February

1999. The conference was arranged by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and the Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs at the Swedish Parliament. The contributors are Anthony Hyman, Olivier Roy, Nancy Hatch Dupree, Michael Keating, and Anders Flage. This publication can be obtained from SCA in Peshawar or Stockholm.

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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

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Issue No.316

8 June 1999

The Humanitarian Situation in Central Region: A Mid-Year Perspective

About one-quarter of Kabul's one million residents receive some form of humanitarian assistance from international organisations. The current extent of destitution is the culmination of years of hardship and displacement, with many families forced to sell the bulk of their material assets to survive.

Despite predictions to the contrary, life in Kabul did not come to a standstill after the partial withdrawal of support for humanitarian programmes (along with a number of NGOs) in July 1998. The core emergency feeding programmes have continued, despite disruptions, and the most vulnerable continue to receive external assistance. Without significant investment in infrastructure, rehabilitation or commercial development, however, employment opportunities are few. While many civil servants are maintained on the official payroll, salaries are irregularly paid, if at all.

Given that many people are food insecure, the state of public health facilities remains a cause for particular concern. As stocks of externally-supplied drugs are used up, and staff fail to be paid on time, fewer and fewer patients seek care at (free) public facilities, and are forced to go to private clinics, when they can afford them.

Despite an acute lack of resources, rudimentary public services continue, with up to one-third of the city's population having access to electricity and piped water. While there have been attempts of late to

recover some of the costs of such services, given the extent of unemployment, many families cannot afford to pay. Without additional humanitarian support for the most vulnerable, it is difficult to see how they will survive the next winter.

Kabul-based organisations continue to take stock of ongoing and planned assistance activities. A summary of ongoing and planned UN activities has been provided to aid partners and local authorities. NGOs have begun a process of information and data collection on activities in Kabul and its environs.

Efforts to extend additional assistance to the war-affected population of the Shomali valley (northern Kabul, Parwan province) continue. This fertile area, served by an extensive irrigation network, is of potential significance for the food security of the region. While many returnees were able to re-build their homes during 1993-4, subsequent fighting has resulted in widespread destruction and displacement of rural communities. Reports from the area speak of high food prices, due to restrictions on transport across the existing front lines or from the north, and a breakdown of health and other public services. Efforts by UN agencies and NGOs to transport essential supplies by land to the area continue to face obstructions.

Preliminary indications are that crop production in the area declined in 1998 due to lack of inputs and rust disease. If production in 1999 does not improve, families

dependent on purchasing their food will be unlikely to meet their minimum food needs.

Food Aid/Food Security

Central Highlands

The first shipment of 600 MT of WFP provided wheat was distributed in Waras and Panjao to 3,874 families. The second convoy carrying 550 MT of wheat for 4000 families has arrived in the Hazarajat region. Together with OXFAM, WFP is targeting the most vulnerable residents and internally displaced persons in Panjao and Waras districts. The distribution is due to be completed by 20th June.

Following food shortages during 1997/8 associated with a blockade of Hazarajat, the population of this remote area continues to be vulnerable, with most families having few remaining assets. Despite significant displacement as a result of recent fighting and consequent food shortages in some districts, a continuing programme of WFP wheat distributions in the region since late last winter has enabled many families to survive in their areas of origin. Continued instability could further reduce access to food, and limit the activities of humanitarian agencies in the area.

Mazar-i-Sharif

The WFP Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) exercise in Mazar-i-Sharif has been completed. The most vulnerable households are those whose income comes from male casual labour. The currently saturated labour market is bringing wages down and excluding potential labourers. These families earn 70 percent of their minimum food and non-food expenditure needs or the

equivalent of US\$4.00 per month. These households were more vulnerable in 1998 than female-headed ones. Vulnerable families are selling household assets to augment income; this activity increases their minimum income to US\$7.60 per month. Households without an able bodied male receive a substantial proportion of their income from begging. They continue to earn significantly less than the minimum income, but more than families with able-bodied male breadwinners.

Preliminary findings from the FAO and WFP crop assessment mission suggest that crop production may be low for 1999, particularly in the northern regions. The main problem is lack of precipitation in the surplus crop production areas.

Jalalabad

On 3 June, the WFP bakery project in Jalalabad closed as planned. A re-targeting of beneficiaries is scheduled for August and September.

Education

Training

The second regional trainer-training programme on Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC) organised by UNHCR Pakistan and SAVE US was held in Islamabad. This is the first batch of regional trainers on ARC trained anywhere in the world.

The Regional Trainers will train personnel involved in programmes for Afghan refugees inside Pakistan beginning in September 1999. ARC materials will be included in all training programmes for teachers inside Afghanistan.

Materials

UNHCR has funded the printing of 36,000 textbooks in all subjects for schools in Azro-Tizin and Herat. The organisation has also developed and printed teachers' guides for these texts. The guides have so far been distributed in Kabul and Kandahar, while in Azro/Tizin, UNHCR distributed the text books to nearly 2000 children, as well as stationery for children and resource books for teachers. A training programme for teachers in these schools is planned for early June.

Health

- Immunisation

UNICEF and WHO in collaboration with the MoPH are preparing for the second round of National Immunisation Days in all regions in Afghanistan from 13 to 15 June.

A joint mission of the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF, WHO, and the Regional EPI Management Team visited Helmand, Nimroz and Zabul Provinces to meet with local health authorities, NGOs and provincial EPI management teams. The mission evaluated the first round of NIDs and prepared for the second round.

For reasons of security, the first round of the NIDs was delayed in the northern province of Takhar Province. However, by the beginning of June, immunisation was completed in Takhar by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, in co-operation with Medecins sans Frontiers (MSF), public health management teams, UNICEF, and WHO.

Since the first round of NIDs could not be conducted in Bamiyan, WHO has sent the vaccines to three districts to be

used for polio immunisation when the situation permits.

Medical Supplies and Services

WHO collaborated with Jalalabad University and Health Net International to establish a blood bank at the University hospital. The hospital is mainly for gynaecology, obstetrics, and paediatrics and serves as a referral centre for three provinces of the eastern region.

WHO distributed medical supplies to clinics and hospitals in Nangahar, Ghazni, Paktika, Kabul, Logar, Helmand, Zabul, Kunduz, Baghlan, Faryab, and Balkh.

In Mazar-i-Sharif, WHO started construction of the Mazar Public Hospital Emergency ward.

Primary health services were provided to Azro, Tezin, Jarubi and Sarobi, four PEACE Initiative-selected districts of Logar and Kabul, where the number of residents has increased due to the recent repatriation. The project, run by Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) International, in collaboration with ISRA, has been funded by UNHCR.

Nearly half of the 1900 patients were female, and 45% of the total were children under 15.

Health Training

In order to identify the needs and priorities for their community and accordingly plan activities by UNICEF, a local shura (council) was formed in Liwanian village of Paktia Province.

Rural Rehabilitation Department social mobilisers reached 300 people with messages about health, hygiene, breast-

feeding and the dangers of early marriage and pregnancies.

In preparation for the Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) and Hygiene Education and Sanitation (HES) campaign, WHO began training of trainers in Kabul's Miwand Hospital.

Safe Water/Sanitation

Under UNICEF's water and environmental sanitation program, thirteen wells were equipped with hand pumps and handed over to communities in Gardez and Narang Districts of Paktia and Kunar Provinces. These will benefit some 4,000 people. So far, 60 wells out of 100 planned have been completed.

As part of the UNCHS sanitation programme in Kabul, a number of female health educators have been involved in efforts to promote health education, environmental sanitation and hygiene.

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

In quake affected areas of Wardak and Logar Provinces, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) continues to support the repair and reconstruction of 13 schools and 49 wells which were damaged or destroyed in the earthquake.

Agriculture

Livestock

Animal health and production improvement courses have started in Jalalabad, Khost and Kabul. Forty-two veterinarians are attending the one-year course.

In Shindad district of Farah Province, one of the PEACE initiative areas,

turkey chicks have hatched and turkey eggs are currently being incubated.

Crops

FAO released 37.5 MT of wheat from WFP for SCA summer crops seed procurement and continued distribution of summer crops for further multiplication purpose in Nangahar and Kunar Provinces.

FAO continued recording maturity data, roguing of wheat research trials, small wheat seed multiplication plots, harvesting of barley research trials, preparation for harvesting wheat research trials and small seed multiplication plots in FAO research farms in Mazar-i-Sharif and Taloqan Province.

FAO distributed 31MT summer crop seed to 202 contract seed growers, harvested 25 wheat demonstration fields in 5 districts and monitored 9 private fruit tree nurseries growers in Kandahar.

Mine Action

Five persons were injured in an unexploded ordnance incident last week in Kabul. In order to build up the technical capacity of mine action teams, MAPA has extended courses to survey teams in Kabul.

Repatriation

According to UNHCR, 5,000 Afghan refugees from Pakistan have returned to the eastern and southern regions of Afghanistan during the last ten days.

Twenty-one Tajik refugees returned from Kunduz to Tajikistan via Sher Khan Bander on 3 June. UNHCR provided transportation and negotiated their safe passage

with the warring factions through the front lines.

Before the return of a group of 300 families from Balochistan, UNHCR has signed an agreement with the local NGO VARA for the rehabilitation of the Upper Bagat canal in Garmser District of Helmand Province.

Narcotics

In a UNDCP pilot project for poppy eradication, the UN drug agency has verified that 400 hectares of poppies were destroyed in three districts of Kandahar Province.

According to the agreement in the pilot project, poppy production in the three districts was to be reduced by 20% in 1999, with the aim of 100% eradication in these areas by 2001.

Preliminary results of UNDCP's opium survey showed that the target reduction had not been met. Therefore, the community was asked to eradicate some of their poppy fields in order to meet the proposed reduction in 1999.

Local authorities, representatives of the aid community working in the province, national and international journalists, and Kandahar-based diplomats witnessed the eradication.

As part of the pilot project, UNDCP is collaborating with FAO and other partners in providing assistance which will enable farmers to move away from poppy production. For this purpose, improved seeds are being distributed in the three districts, and forty shallow wells have been completed in Maiwand district.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.317

15 June 1999

UNHCR Donor Mission

The UNHCR donor mission has concluded its visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The mission was comprised of representatives from the Netherlands, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Canada, UK and Italy. The aim of the mission was to obtain guidance on future UNHCR activities and set objectives for 2000 and beyond. They travelled to Herat and Kandahar, where they received a warm welcome and met with the governors, local authorities, and UN and NGO staff.

Afghan Support Group

In preparation for the ASG meeting in Stockholm (June 21-22), the UN met with NGOs in Peshawar last week. The meeting was well attended by both international and national NGO co-ordinating bodies. On June 11, the Afghan Programming Board Meeting was held in Islamabad. UN agencies and donor representatives attended.

Food Aid/Food Security

Central Highlands

The emergency food distribution to Waras and Panjao continues. The fifth and final convoy of 14 trucks carrying 235 MT of wheat left Kabul has arrived in the area.

Distribution of approximately 1,800 MT of wheat to these two districts is expected to be completed by 18th June to 15,000 families.

The operation is scheduled to continue in the districts of Behsud 1 and Behsud 2, south of Bamiyan City. WFP plans to distribute 2,000 MT of wheat to nearly 70,000 beneficiaries. The operation will be carried out in conjunction with MADERA.

Education

A joint mission of UNICEF and the Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) visited home schools in three villages of Surkhrud District, Nangarhar Province. A meeting with RRD Kunar to discuss problems related to home-schools concluded that the monitors will submit weekly reports for RRD.

A Coordination Group for Education (CGE) held a meeting at the UNICEF-Jalalabad office. Representatives from ISRA, SCA, SERVE, AG-BasEd, ABRAAR and ACBAR participated. It was decided to invite a member from the Education Department to attend the CGE meetings.

Health

Immunisation

The second round of the National Immunisation Days (NIDs) anti-polio campaign began on 13 June in all areas of Afghanistan. This followed extensive planning and training of medical personnel and volunteers in all regions and shipping of supplies. Sup-

plies were successfully sent across the front lines to Kapisa and Parwan Provinces.

The Northern Alliance agreed in writing to observe a cease-fire during the campaign, while the Taliban authorities verbally agreed to do so.

UNICEF and WHO are implementing the campaign in collaboration with health officials and NGOs.

At Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar, a second round inauguration celebration was attended by hundreds of volunteers, vaccinators, visitors, children, local authorities, and representatives of UN agencies and NGOs. Mr. Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rahmani, the governor of Kandahar, discussed the importance of polio eradication. He formally launched the campaign by administering a dose of polio vaccine to a child.

The next national health drive is the Oral Rehydration Therapy/Hygiene Education & Sanitation (ORT/HES) campaign, scheduled for later this month. UNICEF is producing social mobilisation materials and dispatching supplies.

Medical supplies and services

WHO distributed equipment, drugs and other medical supplies to a number of clinics and hospitals in Helmand, Badakhshan, Takhar, Farah, Baghlan and Badghis Provinces.

Health Training

UNICEF conducted a four-day training on the Primary Health Care/Safe Motherhood Initiative (PHC/SMI) for national trainers from Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Kabul Provinces in Kabul.

WHO organised a one-day workshop in Farah Provincial Hospital on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance.

In southern region, WHO conducted a three-day malaria-training course for district co-ordinators.

Safe Water/Sanitation

In UNICEF's ongoing Water, Education, and Sanitation (WES) initiative, six hand-pumps were completed in Dehsabz village, providing safe drinking water to 1,500 people. The male and female social mobilisers of the RRD disseminated hygiene messages to some 277 women and 220 men.

The WES initiative is also continuing in Laghman. As a result of social mobilisation by the RRD, the communities in Laghman agreed to contribute a large portion of the cost in the well construction, hanpump installation and latrine construction project.

Chlorination of wells in Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar and Paktia area-based projects has been started by the RRD. UNICEF provided chlorine powder, plastic bags and chlorination brochures for the campaign, which will last until end October.

Cirrhosis Outbreak

MoPH, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO, and the agriculture department met at Herat Regional Hospital to discuss the control and prevention of the cirrhosis outbreak in Gulran District of Herat Province. The meeting prepared educational messages on the issue for the inhabitants of Gulran. A joint mission of MoPH, WHO, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, and agriculture department also visited the affected district.

187 cases have been registered with 54 deaths. Four patients suffering from the disease have been sent to Agha Khan Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan for investigation.

Disability

The Comprehensive Disabled Afghan Programme (CDAP) has established physiotherapy centres in five PEACE Initiative-selected districts in Kandahar. The centres, dealing with disabilities and preventive measures, will serve both disabled and non-disabled people in the area.

CDAP launched a community-based rehabilitation training course for 20 Community Volunteers (CVs) in Kandahar. The training aims to build on the indigenous capacity and local methods to cope with disability-related problems.

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

In Dand and Daman District of Kandahar, UNOPS/ARRP is assisting the village development committee to construct two community centres. The centres can also be used as pre-schools when they are free. To provide 10,500 villagers with potable water, UNOPS/ARRP is constructing 60 tube wells in three districts of Farah.

Agriculture

Livestock

Female veterinary trainers from Guzara District of Herat Province reported that 130 village women are being trained in household animal health, feeding, and hygiene in seven villages. This four-day FAO training programme targeting groups of ten women at a time started five weeks ago and is on-

going. The most successful candidates will later be selected and trained as livestock community health workers. The initiative targets most regions of the country.

Crops

FAO planted summer crop research trials and weeded and irrigated vegetable seed production plots in both FAO research farms in Mazar-i-Sharif and Taloqan. FAO also monitored several wheat demonstration fields by NPPP seed in districts of Balkh.

In southern region, FAO processed 83 MT maize and 92 MT mung bean seeds and distributed 15 tons of mung bean seeds to contract seed growers. Seeds and fertiliser were issued to VARA for the summer seed multiplication programme in Farah Province.

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29 JUNI 1999

Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.318

22 June 1999

Afghanistan Support Group

The ASG was held in Stockholm on 21-22 June. Major donors, UN agencies, ICRC and others attended. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi gave a briefing on the ongoing peace process. The conference took stock of the environment for assistance, common programming, funding, narcotics, refugee protection, and human rights.

At the end of the conference, Mr. Brahimi said that international donors provided assurances that they would continue to fund aid programmes for the country. He also said representatives from Sweden, Japan and Canada would travel to Afghanistan to discuss international community concerns.

Forest Fire in Kunar Province

A forest fire erupted in Kunar Province on 12th June. The affected areas are the forests of Dar-e Paich, Degal, and Shorak districts in Kunar. Afghanistan has requested emergency assistance from the Government of Pakistan.

Food Aid/Food Security

UNHCR is planning for the return of 1,500 families from Iran through the western province of Herat on 28th June for which WFP will be providing 50 kg of wheat per person. This pilot initiative is a prelude to the possible return of up to 3,000 people per week, going through Herat to various

parts of the country. The repatriation process is expected to continue through 1999 and 2000.

The WFP food distribution to Panjao and Waras districts of Bamyan Province has concluded. In collaboration with OXFAM, WFP distributed some 2,000 tonnes of wheat.

Health

Female social mobilisers visited about 80 women in Narang District in Kunar on the improvement of family and social health and the rights of children and women. Health educators also reached some 5,000 females and males in Herat, with hygiene and sanitation messages.

Immunisation

UNICEF and WHO in collaboration with MoPH and health NGOs successfully implemented the second round of National Immunization Days (NIDs) in all regions of Afghanistan.

The 1999 campaign marks the first time in eighteen months that immunisation against polio reached children in many parts of the northern region around Mazar-i-Sharif. In a major break-through in the central region, polio vaccines and funds for health workers and mobilizers were transported across the front line and into the provinces of Parwan and Kapisa. Dedicated staff from ICRC, NGOs, UN agencies, civil societies and local authorities dispatched

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vaccines for the first time to the front line by truck. They were transported by donkeys to the other side. This is the first time in three years that some of the districts in these two provinces received the polio vaccine. This region reported many of the country's new annual cases of the disease.

With results still being tallied, UNICEF and WHO officials are optimistic that a higher percentage than ever before of children under five were reached with the oral polio vaccine in the 1999 anti-polio campaign.

The Ministry of Public Health, UNICE, WHO, UNDP, CDAP, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Ibn-i-Sina, and relevant NGOs contributed to the campaign. The next round of NIDs will be held in October and November to help achieve the global goal of polio eradication by the end of 2000.

Disease Outbreaks

A joint MoPH, WHO and UNICEF mission visited Gulran District of Herat Province, scene of an outbreak of cirrhosis. The situation was found satisfactory, and patients have shown some improvement. Registered cases have reached 190 with 54 deaths.

In Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni, Nimroz and Kunduz Provinces, so far 57 people have died from an outbreak of diarrhoea. Cholera Task Forces are active in these areas, including officials from the MoPH in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and NGOs. Stool samples have been collected for analysis to determine whether the outbreak is cholera. Confirmation is awaited.

Medical supplies and services

WHO provided 3.5 MT of hospital equipment and medicines to MoPH for distribution to provincial hospitals in the country. Medical supplies were also sent to Herat, Ghazni, Jalalabad, Paktika, Badakhshan, Kunduz and Balkh.

Health Training

UNICEF and WHO have conducted training on diarrhoea case management in Kabul and another similar training course for doctors from Wardak, Logar and Kabul Provinces.

The Nangahar Provincial Health Director, members of Provincial Health Management Team (PHMT) from Laghman, and representative of AMI (NGO) met at UNICEF Jalalabad to discuss PHC demonstration programmes and the Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI)/Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC).

The NGO Merlin has identified two midwives for its clinics in Anaradara and Lash-e-Juwain districts in Herat. Two rooms of the clinics will be upgraded for provision of basic emergency obstetric care. Community shura members were also oriented on Safe Motherhood Initiative projects and provided with communication materials.

WHO conducted a one-day training workshop on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance, measles and tetanus in the Herat Regional Hospital. 30 male and female trainers attended the workshop.

Safe Water/Sanitation

A technical team for selection of standard handpump and borehole models, consisting

of RRD, DACAAR, SCA, WHO and UNICEF finalised an appropriate model for dug well platforms. UNICEF is preparing a standardisation handbook for handpumps. Eight handpumps were installed on wells in Alinegar and Narang Districts of Laghman and Kunar Provinces. These will benefit some 2,400 people.

UNICEF provided bleaching powder to MoPH Herat, DACAAR and ARCS for chlorination of dugwells. In Guzara District of Herat Province, 9 handpumps were installed and 30 double pit latrines were constructed for 30 families.

UNICEF's current Water and Environmental Sanitation Programme (WES) is the largest provider of water and sanitation systems in rural areas. With the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development as the major counterpart, the WES programme aims to construct or rehabilitate handpumps, dug wells, boreholes, latrines, piped water systems, and sanitation systems. Community participation is critical in the siting, construction, and maintenance of the pumps and wells. The programme also delivers messages on hygiene.

Disability

To reintegrate disabled children into normal schools and enable them to read, write and speak, the Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Programme completed a two-month capacity building training in sign language and Braille in Peshawar. 15 female and male CDAP field staff working with mentally handicapped children and those with sensory problems attended the course.

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

UNCHS continued to support urban communities in Kabul, by assisting community-based education, income generation and shelter rehabilitation activities. As part of its ongoing sanitation programme, a number of female health educators have been involved in efforts to promote health education on environmental sanitation and hygiene in District 6. A number of female health educators will be involved in this project.

300 square metres of asphalt road in important locations, including hospitals, were repaired in Kabul.

Agriculture

Livestock

In addition to ongoing livestock activities country wide, this week FAO Livestock distributed 45,000 doses of Anthrax vaccine to Herat Province Veterinary Field Units.

Crops

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has recently published a report on seed activities and food security through sustainable crop production in Afghanistan. The report highlights major activities: seed production of commercial cultivars for food crops through the private sectors and the national seed programme carried out between May 1998 and May 1999.

Despite in-country uncertainties, the project was able to produce and distribute nearly 10,100 tonnes of high yielding seeds. PEACE Initiative-selected areas received more than 750 tonnes of seeds (340% higher than the targeted amount).

Copies of the publication are available in FAO Crops offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For more information, please contact FAO Crops Afghanistan.

DACAAR has completed a project to introduce new agricultural technologies among 290 families in Mongor, Ghazni Province. The project conducted on-farm trials with farmers to identify improved agricultural practices, established contract seed growers for the production of quality seeds, and introduced new crops varieties and improved water management.

Mine Action

In 1999, MAPA has completed the following:

- Survey of 1,818,629 square metres of mined area, and 7,193,506 square metres of battle area.
- Clearance of 2,274,896 square metres of mined area, and 6,244,432 square metres of battle area.
- Briefing of 63,302 people on mine awareness
- Training of 43 new deminers, re-training of 253 current deminers.

MAPA employs 72 manual mine clearance teams; 16 mechanical mine clearance teams; 17 mine dog groups (mine clearance); 33 mine dog sets (mine clearance); 37 survey teams (mine contaminated areas); 10 battle area clearance teams (mines and or unexploded ordnance); 60 mine awareness trainers.

According to the Regional Mine Action Center (RMAC) one child was killed and another injured in two mine incidents last week in Kabul. In Qala-I-Hakimi village, Enjil district, Herat Province, one villager was killed and one was seriously injured by an anti-tank mine.

Narcotics

The Afghanistan 1999 opium poppy survey in the north (Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Balkh, and Jozjan Provinces) has begun. Results from the rest of the country are currently under analysis. The final report of the annual survey will be ready for distribution by the first week of September 1999.

As part of the Shinwar Drug Control Action Plan, in Nangahar Province, UNDCP is providing developmental assistance to the farmers and the community. The assistance is aimed at helping them to gradually eradicate opium poppy cultivation in their district.

In this program, a primary school has been completed that will be attended by both boys and girls. The community established a committee to supervise operation of the school and provide financial support to the school.

Also in Shinwar, UNDCP provided various kinds of assistance to the agricultural sector. Forty-eight women were trained in family health and livestock, two hundred farmers in wheat and vegetable practices, and twenty farmers in seed production. Animal vaccination also continued.

Calendar by AWN

The Afghan Women's Network in Islamabad has published a calendar for 1999-2000. It contains drawings and articles in English, Pushtu and Dari selected from among the work of refugee school children in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The calendar was published to commemorate One Day in Peace, 1 January 2000. For further information, please contact Gulalai Habib, at the UN Co-ordinator's Office for Afghanistan.

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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

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Afghanistan Support Group

The next ASG meeting will be held
in Ottawa in December 1999.

The ASG met from 21st to 22nd June in Stockholm. Representatives from 16 donor countries, UN agencies, ICRC and NGOs attended.

The meeting drew attention to several concerns. First, they recognised that the lack of national reconciliation negatively affects donors' willingness to engage. The meeting also expressed concerns over reports of expanding poppy cultivation and forced repatriation of refugees from Iran. They appealed to the governments of Iran and Pakistan to reaffirm their commitment to refugees' rights to asylum and protection.

In view of the existing low level of social capital in Afghanistan, the meeting also recognized the need to build human and community capital inside the country in order to help Afghans solve their own problems. In addition, there was general recognition that many opportunities to address rehabilitation needs exist at the community level. In general the meeting emphasized that donors want to keep Afghanistan in the picture and are seeking ways and means to ensure funding for this and next year.

The ASG also noted with concern the relatively low level of response to the Consolidated Appeal (CAP). So far, only 41 million dollars has been pledged out of 112 million identified as high priority funding. Of this 41 million, only 29 million comes in response to the Appeal, leaving a shortfall of some 84 million dollars in priority funding for 1999.

Gender Mission

The Gender Advisor to UN Afghanistan, accompanied by a team from the Office of the UN Co-ordinator, recently travelled to Kandahar.

They began a dialogue with local authorities and aimed to identify opportunities to move forward with the UN social and gender agenda.

Through negotiations with the authorities, key technical departments, and representatives of the local community, the mission made a first hand assessment of field opportunities for establishing partnerships with local players to address the problems encountered by the social sectors in Afghanistan.

As part of the gender plan of action, specific activities have been developed to mainstream gender issues at the programming level of the UN system in Afghanistan. These include workshops organised and facilitated, agency by agency, by the Gender Advisor to the UN Co-ordinator's office to move forward with a common gender policy and programming methodologies.

Forest Fire in Kunar Province

Following the forest fire in Dar-e-Paich, Degal and Shorak Districts of Kunar, the UN over-flew the area twice last week. On the second round, the mission did not spot

either flames or smoke in the area on Wednesday. This may indicate that the fire is out.

Food Aid/Food Security

The WFP emergency food distribution operation in Waras and Panjo districts of Central Highlands was completed on 18th June. The operation, implemented by OXFAM lasted a total of four weeks and mobilized twelve WFP national staff members. A WFP team monitored the distribution of over 2,000 MT of food to over 12,500 families.

The second phase of the operation plans to target over 12,000 families with an additional 2,000 MT of food. A significant number of internally displaced families may be included in the operation subject to availability of WFP stocks. The operation is scheduled to get underway by the end of June in the districts of Behsud 1 and 2, Wardak Province.

Contingent upon food availability in the north, WFP has approved two food-for-work projects for Mazar-i-Sharif with 266 MT of wheat. This is the first time that WFP has approved projects for the area since 1997. Food-for-work will be used for digging 50 wells, equipped with hand-pumps, excavation of drainage ditches, cleaning public toilets, and the collection of solid waste under the sanitation project. The project will employ 3,600 labourers and 50 female managers to be remunerated by UNCHS in July. WFP has also approved a third project in which 162 tons of food will be provided for 1500 kindergarten children.

Community fora will implement all three projects.

Education

The director of Rural Rehabilitation Development (RRD), male/female monitors and UNICEF staff monitored the final examinations of the community-based home schools in Laghman.

In Kabul, UNICEF paid monitoring visits to various local educational and vocational institutes for normal and hearing-impaired children.

WHO started the restoration of the Nursing School for Women in Herat. One hundred women are studying in this institution.

Outbreak of severe diarrhoea in Ghazni, Kabul and Kandahar

Acute diarrhoea has broken out in Jaghori district of Ghazni; Kabul City, Spin Boldak in Kandahar, and Kunduz. Over 4,700 cases have been traced out over the last three weeks. 51 people have died so far. Investigations are continuing to ascertain the cause of the disease.

In order to increase public awareness of measures they can take to prevent and control diarrheal diseases the Oral Rehydration Therapy/Hygiene Education and Sanitation campaign was held in all regions of Afghanistan on 20th to 28th June. In preparation, UNICEF and WHO conducted training of trainers and of health workers in many areas of the country.

The ORT/HES campaign is just one part of UNICEF's assistance to Afghanistan. The Health and Nutrition Programme includes the Expanded Programme on Immunisation and National Immunisation Day campaigns specifically against polio; the Safe Mother Initiative which aims to lower the high maternal mortality rate; and sup-

port to the primary health care system throughout the country. Other components of UNICEF support include Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases (CDD), Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT), Hygiene Education and Sanitation (HES), and nutrition, with focus on micronutrient deficiencies and breast-feeding.

The Ministry of Public Health is the programme's counterpart, with implementation dependent on many national and international NGOs throughout the country.

Health Training

WHO conducted training on malaria control and treatment in Kandahar and Herat and on anaesthesia in Kabul for female, and male medical personnel. In Kunduz, WHO conducted two workshops on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) and surveillance for medical doctors from Kunduz and Baghlan Provinces including seven female doctors.

Safe Water/Sanitation

The Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) organised a one-day practical training for community masons, who are constructing household latrines under UNICEF's water and sanitation (WES) project, in Narang District of Kunar Province. Five wells, dug by Narang communities, were equipped with handpumps, bringing the total to 70 out of 100 planned. These 5 handpumps will benefit 1,500 people. In Shinkorak, Kunar, the design for the Pipe Water Supply Scheme has been completed. UNICEF will provide the supplies to RRD Kunar to start the project.

An evaluation mission was undertaken in Badghis where the WES project was completed in May. All handpumps were functioning properly and latrines being used by families. RRD Badghis improved/installed 100 handpumps in Muqur, Qala-e-Now, Qarghach, Firistan and Tagabi-Ismail Districts in Badghis. Seven handpumps were installed and 10 double pit latrines were constructed in Gozara district of Herat Province.

The female health educators visited 100 houses in Mahterlam City in Laghman with health and hygiene messages. They also collected data on hygiene practices for compilation by UNICEF.

UNICEF's current Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) programme is the largest provider of water and sanitation systems in rural areas. With the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development as the major counterpart, the WES programme aims to construct or rehabilitate handpumps, dug wells, boreholes, latrines, piped water systems, and sanitation systems. Community participation is critical in the siting, construction, and maintenance of the pumps and wells. The programme also delivers messages on hygiene.

Medical supplies

WHO provided kits to 40 traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and village health volunteers (VHVs) in Herat. WHO also provided furniture and medical/surgical supplies to a health centre in Zabul Province. WHO has rehabilitated the center with the cooperation of UNHCR and WFP. WHO provided a variety of medical supplies in Ghazni, Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, Kunduz, Mazar, Jalalabad, Faizabad, Bamyan, Herat, and Kabul.

Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

UNCHS continued to support urban communities in Kabul, by assisting community-based education, income generation, shelter rehabilitation and sanitation activities. As a result, 105 cubic meters of solid waste were removed, 300 sqm asphalt road was repaired and 172 cubic meters of drainage system was excavated.

Repatriation

UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Herat are expecting some 1,500 possible returnees from Iran. UNICEF has provided blankets, plastic tarpaulin, handpumps, water purification tablets, ORS, water containers and essential drugs to IOM for distribution among the returnees.

Narcotics

26th June marked the worldwide observance of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

UNDCP organised activities in Kabul and Jalalabad and refugee camps in Pakistan. In Islamabad, UNDCP organized a fun fair for families, in collaboration with the Narcotics Drug Control Division of Pakistan.

According to UNDCP, an increase in opium poppy production is nearly certain this year in Afghanistan, but some concrete steps are being taken by the local authorities, and new programmes should create positive results.

In 1998, farmers cultivated an area of around 63,000 hectares, but the crop was lower than expected (2,100 MT) because of bad weather. This year, the overall zone of

cultivation has increased and new areas have begun cultivation of poppies.

Because of UNDCP dialogue with local authorities in Afghanistan, 34 processing laboratories in Nangahar Province were closed earlier this year. In mid-May, the Taliban had also begun an eradication campaign in Kandahar Province, with a likely 400 hectares being eradicated.