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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

AMBASSADEN ISLAMABAD
BILAG
12 APR. 2000
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Issue No.358

11 April 2000

The Drought

In Herat, the WFP VAM section has surveyed Adraskan district, where the main source of income for people is agriculture and animal husbandry. Initial findings are that livestock are dying due to non-availability of animal food. The autumn crop is unsatisfactory due to lack of rain, nor is the forecast for the spring harvest encouraging. The income generation and handicraft industry has also been affected because the raw material is not available. A detailed report will only be available after all data has been analysed. The VAM team has followed the survey of Adraskan district with an assessment of food needs in Gulran district.

Meanwhile, MSF has conducted a survey on the impact of the drought on the health sector in Kandahar. The drought is expected to increase the incidence of infectious diseases and skin diseases. They also report a shortage of drinking water in Kandahar City, which may result in increased outbreaks of intestinal diseases, especially among women and children.

Health

World Tuberculosis Day

WHO offices in collaboration with MoPH and other UN agencies and health NGOs celebrated World Tuberculosis Day in all

regions of Afghanistan. All Afghan local dailies celebrated the day by publishing articles about tuberculosis, its control, and treatment. The Deputy Public Health Minister inaugurated the celebration in Kabul at the Ministry of Public Health. In Faizabad and Ghazni, the governors addressed public gatherings on the control and treatment of the disease.

Measles Outbreaks Continue

In Herat, an outbreak of measles in Toolak district of Ghor province has affected 607 children, of whom ninety-six have died. UNICEF in collaboration with the Regional EPI Management Team (REMT) arranged emergency measles vaccination with vitamin A supplementation for 3,000 children under five years in the affected and high-risk areas.

In Badakhshan, the MoPH has reported a new outbreak of measles, which has killed fifty children in seven villages of Yaftal-e-Payeen district. WHO, MSF and the MoPH have dispatched teams for treatment and vaccination.

Iodisation

UNICEF has fielded a consultant in Herat to assess the possibility of iodisation of salt in the region. UNICEF met representatives of the Department of Mines and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Herat

in late March on the issue and agreed to visit the major source of salt in the region (Namaksar Salt Lake) at Ghoryan district. A mission to the salt deposit in Gorya took place at the end of March.

Training

In Jalalabad WHO in collaboration with the MoPH conducted an EPI Health Workers Training Course for twenty health workers from Kunar province. A three-week training course under the umbrella of Great Azro Initiative in Hesarak District was conducted for ten persons. EPI training was also recently held in Kunduz and Ghazni.

Medical supplies

WHO provided medical supplies to two hospitals and three clinics in Jalalabad, to Puli Khomri Hospital in Kunduz, to Rashidan clinic in Ghazni, and the newly established Howz-e-Karbas clinic in Enjil district in Herat. In addition, anti-TB/anti-malaria drugs were provided to Obey and Shindand Districts Basic Health Centres in Herat, to Faizabad and Takhar hospitals, Ragh, Yaftal, Wakhan, Darayem, Shewa, Kishem, Jurm and Wadog clinics, and to Ander and Maquor TB treatment centres and Lajnat-u-Dawa hospital in Paktika province.

Water/Sanitation

Female social mobilisers in Deh Sabz and Bagrami districts of Kabul held sessions with seventy-four women and 231 children. They prepared a list of widows who because of mobilisation agreed to assist in the implementation of programmes in their villages.

In addition, female and male social mobilisers held health education sessions with 650 people in Kabul City and rural districts of Kabul province.

In Herat, two female staff of RRD Herat will train fifty women in house-to-house social mobilisation and hygiene knowledge promotion under the self-help sanitation project in Guzara district of Herat province.

In Jalalabad, fifteen female health workers under the umbrella of the Jalalabad Comprehensive Sanitation project, a WHO/WFP project, visited 421 houses (2,464 families) and conveyed health education messages.

In UNICEF's Water and Environmental Sanitation Programme, thirty-four handpumps were installed in Enjil district of Herat province, providing safe drinking water to 9,000 people.

In Logar, a survey team of General Rural Rehabilitation Department (GRRD) selected sites for well construction and handpump installation. In total five districts were surveyed and 180 villages were selected for well drilling and rigging. Villages with low water supply were selected on a priority basis. The construction work has begun.

A WHO and UNICEF team visited Faizabad City, Badakhshan province in order to conduct a survey for starting the second phase of the Faizabad Water Supply Project. The Faizabad Water Supply System in the old city has been damaged by recent floods--WHO helped the municipality in provision of pipes for repairing the system.

The team met with the Faizabad Governor, the Faizabad mayor, the Chief of Religious Affairs, ulema, elders and tribal chieftains, and the WFP representative.

WFP will provide wheat as food-for-work for the project.

Agriculture

In six districts of Bamiyan Province, FAO continued monitoring wheat fields of local Contract Seed Growers and providing technical advice on seed production technology. The success of the programme depends on the selection of farmers contracted to produce seed. About 4,500 growers are contracted every year. Appropriate producers are those with integrity, experience in the crop and sufficient high quality irrigated arable land to produce the quantity of seed required. Most of the contracted farmers have various backgrounds and skills.

A local PIHAM (Animal Health and Production Improvement Module) team visited eighteen selected farmers in seven villages of Dehsabz District, Kabul Province. The PIHAM course will continue for nine months. It consists of five classrooms and modules, which last for two or three weeks interspersed with six weeks of fieldwork. Most of the training time is spent in the field implementing practical reviews. The first group of PIHAM had twelve trainees (two females and ten males). After completing additional training, they were designated as Master Trainers and carried out all PIHAM training courses.

Rehabilitation

A new project for the rehabilitation of the garden surrounding the mausoleum of Gawhar Shad (at the Herat minarets) is being undertaken by the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage

(SPACH). The project will create a recreational area for the citizens of Herat.

Silk Production

UNOPS/ARRP have distributed 6,000 boxes of Chinese silk worm-eggs in six districts--Gozara, Pashtoon Zarghoon, Enjil, Zindajan, Ghoryan, Kohsan, and Herat City.

Each family will receive one box. One member of the silk production committee has been trained by UNOPS/ARRP in Islamabad in silk export-import.

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan Robbed

A group of armed men robbed the Ghazni Regional Office of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan on the night between 1 and 2 April. The intruders climbed the wall and forcibly subdued the SCA guards. One guard was slightly injured. In all almost AfS. 2,182,000,000, approximately Rs. 2 million, were stolen.

The money, which arrived on 30 March, was the salary of SCA employees and project staff--doctors, health workers, teachers and community workers. The local authorities have been informed.

This robbery was the second in SCA's eighteen years in Afghanistan.

Refugees/Returnees

During the week, UNHCR in Herat received a consignment of 499 blankets and 5,990 tents to boost their stock of essential shelter material. Meanwhile in anticipation of the arrival of many returnees from Iran UNHCR through IOM have completed two transit camps in Islam Qala and Herat. The

camps can hold 140 and 150 tents and include water, sanitation, and a health clinic.

New Website

The United States Public Affairs Programme has opened a new website on Afghanistan, which is available at <http://usembassy.state.gov/afghanistan>.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.357

UN Withdraws from Kandahar

The United Nations withdrew all international staff from Kandahar, Afghanistan, on the evening of 28 March. On 26 March, armed Taliban entered a number of United Nations premises, allegedly in search of escapees. United Nations representatives in Kandahar met with representatives of the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protest these actions. The local authorities apologised and gave reassurances that these actions would not be repeated. The United Nations accepted the apology and continued with its humanitarian work on behalf of the Afghan people. However, on 27 March, armed Taliban again forced their way into United Nations premises: property was damaged, and staff were intimidated.

Because these actions are clear violations of United Nations immunity and of formal agreements between the United Nations and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the United Nations was compelled to stop work in the area in the interests and safety of United Nations staff. Specifically, the United Nations has withdrawn international staff, cancelled all missions to the area, closed United Nations offices in Kandahar, and ceased all United Nations assistance activities in southern region.

Before resuming operations in southern Afghanistan, the United Nations seeks a reaffirmation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that the security protocols will be respected.

The Drought

According to the UN Regional Coordinator in Herat, the Governor of Badghis Province reports severe shortage of water in Jawan, Tagab Alam and Sang Atash districts of Badghis province due to low snowfall and no rain. Available water is salty, dirty and unusable by people or animals. FAO and WFP corroborate this report after recent visits to the area. The Regional Coordinator plans a joint UN mission to Qala-e-Naw to assess the situation.

In Herat, more kochis arrive with their livestock by truck everyday. The local authority is providing free trucks to help them move away from Kandahar. Helmand and Nimroz. There are several kochi camps along the Herat-Turgundi road at intervals of two to three kilometres. At the edge of every camp there are many carcasses of sheep and goats, which died as result of transport stress, lack of water and forage.

The most recent update on the drought is attached to this Weekly Update. You may also access it at the Assistance Afghanistan website: www.pcpafg.org. The report on the drought is filed in the "news" section, under "other."

Health

Women and Health Care

At Malalai Maternity hospital in Kabul 350 new mothers received education on the proper care and breast-feeding of new-

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borns. Newly opened Pul-i-Alam hospital has been receiving many patients. The MoPH will recruit eleven midwives for Basic Health Care sub-centres in Logar province. Despite many difficulties in the organising of the course, training in women's health began in Laghman province with UNICEF, WHO, MoPH and NGO involvement.

RRD's female social mobilisers and health educators continued to reach women in Kabul city and rural districts of Dehsabz, Kamari and Bagrami with messages on health and hygiene issues, importance of safe drinking water and excreta disposal, and the role of women in personal and environmental hygiene matters. They also provided information on mine awareness, Convention on the Rights of Child and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Health Planning

The WHO office in Ghazni has prepared a health work plan for 2000 and distributed copies to all health stakeholders in south-eastern Afghanistan. In Kunduz, WHO chaired the EPI co-ordination meeting, which was attended by the MoPH, MSF and SCA aimed at conducting EPI refresher training course for vaccinators in Kunduz and better implementation of routine EPI activities in the northeast. The meeting also discussed district micro planning and MCH activities. In Paktika, a joint WHO/MOPH team visited 10 districts that have no health facilities in order to prepare a comprehensive micro-plan for the NIDs campaign in May.

Medical supplies

WHO provided anti-TB drugs to Garamser District Hospital (Helmand) and Alkhedmat Hospital (Kandahar) and medical and surgical supplies to Ghazni Civil Hospital, which has been partially repaired with the assistance of WHO. In western Afghanistan, a WHO x-ray technician has surveyed and repaired x-ray equipment and machines in Herat, Farah and Badghis provinces. He also provided in-service training on maintenance and safe use of the equipment. In Kunduz, WHO conducted EPI refresher training for vaccinators.

Water/Sanitation

About seventy persons including the Governor of Herat, UN agencies and NGOs participated in World Water Day in Herat. The President of RRD spoke about the importance of water for all living beings. The local media provided comprehensive coverage of the UNICEF-sponsored event. WWD was also celebrated in Kunar province, where UNICEF focused on widespread deforestation in the area.

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed a water supply project in Maiwand district of Kandahar Province. The eleven wells dug will benefit 150 families, while seventy-five baths and sixty latrines will benefit seventy-five families. The community participated in site selection, and provided unskilled labour and some materials. The pumps provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Education

UNICEF reports that home schools for girls in Jalalabad, previously closed by the Department of Education, spontaneously reopened and are functioning.

Agriculture

Livestock

FAO fodder crops specialists monitored 33 experimental plots in a PEACE Initiative district in Kandahar province. The programme has initiated new fodder crop demonstrations in Farah, Kandahar, Kabul and Nangarhar Provinces. Two hundred farmers have been contracted so far. In 1999, these activities were extended in northern and central Afghanistan. In addition to new seed varieties, technical staff are also giving advice on fertilizer use, irrigation, harvesting, and how to make better use of fodder for animal feeding. These demonstrations have shown that improved seed varieties can improve yields.

Narcotics

Police in New Zealand say they have broken an Afghan run syndicate, smuggling illegal immigrants - many from Pakistan - to Australia, via New Zealand. The syndicate were also believed to have been involved in drug smuggling and counterfeit currency, with some of the immigrants funding the fees due to the organisation by becoming drug couriers.

The Government of Pakistan announced the setting up of fifteen new checkpoints along the Pak/Afghan border. These will be manned by Customs and Frontier Constabulary personnel and while their primary remit will be the trafficking of

commercial goods, it may well have secondary benefit for the anti-smuggling effort.

To follow-up on the implementation of Mullah Omar's decree to reduce opium poppy cultivation by one-third, Mullah Rabani, Head of the Ministers' Council of the Taliban, in a letter to the Governors of Helmand and Kandahar, reiterated the Taliban's commitment to reduce opium poppy cultivation and informed the Governors that progress will be evaluated through the Annual Opium Poppy Survey. Subsequently, the Governors instructed the district administrators of the respective provinces to ensure implementation of Mullah Omar's decree.

The Kandahar Drug Control Co-ordination Unit (QDCCU) conducted a preliminary survey in the Southwestern Region including UNDCP's target districts (Ghorak, Khakriz, and Maiwand) regarding the status of the implementation of Mullah Omar's decree and the Governor's order for 50% reduction in opium poppy cultivation in the target districts this year. The preliminary survey of the QDCCU mentions that farmers largely comply with Mullah Omar's decree and the Governor's order and also mentions that no poppy was cultivated on government land. The preliminary findings of the QDCCU will be verified through UNDCP's annual opium poppy survey.

Refugees/Returnees

Iran

Ten families (fifty-eight individuals) have been deported from Iran to Zaranj. In addition, 1,233 persons were forcibly returned through Islam Qala (Herat). UNHCR strongly protested these deportation in the wake of the implementation of the volun-

tary repatriation programme from Iran. In preparation for the voluntary return of refugees, UNHCR has completed surveys for the establishment of holding and transit camps in Islam Qala, Zaranj, Herat, and Dilaram. Work on installation of water and sanitation systems is to commence soon with DACAAR. The first group of 750 returnees from Iran is expected to arrive in Herat on 9 April 2000.

In Islam Qala and Herat, two transit camps are almost ready. Provision of tents for shelter and water holes are being completed at both locations. UNHCR and IOM will arrange transportation from the border to the provincial capitals. Basic needs expected at destination are water, shelter, improvement of the roads, health and later education.



Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Afghanistan

**Information Note:
The Drought in Southern Afghanistan**

The drought affecting southern Afghanistan is continuing to take a toll on agricultural and urban areas. Although it has rained three times this year, January and February have been unusually dry with far below average precipitation. Compounding the current water shortage is the scarcity of rain during both 1998 and 1999. The situation is likely to get worse because the period for rain is rapidly ending, and the next rains are not expected until December. The Helmand River, one of the major rivers in southwest Afghanistan, can now be crossed on foot in Lashkargah, Helmand province. This phenomenon indicates the severity of the current water shortage. Pending the receipt of water from snow melt (snowfall over winter was reportedly low this year) in the Central Highlands, southern Afghanistan may face a possible water emergency. This could involve a serious lack of drinking water in urban areas, increased disease outbreaks, severe loss of livestock, and crop failure in the breadbasket of Afghanistan.

A UN/NGO task force was formed in mid-March to assess and plan a response to the developing situation. The geographical extent of the current affected area are the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and Nimroz, with some effects seen in Zabul and Uruzgan. New reports, as yet unconfirmed, have been received that the drought is also affecting animals in Farah Province.

The Rural Situation

Feed available through grazing has declined due to the drought. Moreover, farmers have insufficient quantities of fodder from the 1999 harvest due to low yields. The result is that animals in affected areas have begun dying of starvation. So far, livestock owners of the Registan desert, who are mainly Kochis (nomads), are most seriously affected. Some have already lost up to 100% of their stock. After review of historic animal numbers in the area, FAO has found that in 1997/98 there were an estimated four million sheep and goats owned by Kochis in Kandahar, Helmand and Nimroz. Total cattle, sheep, and goats are estimated at about 5.6 million. Although livestock mortality rates have not yet been collected for all regions, assessment of Shinkay district and Shemolzai district in districts of Kandahar and Zabul showed that the mortality rate of sheep varied between 38% in and 63% respectively. Animal mortality is expected to have a very adverse impact on the livelihoods of those engaged in livestock production in southern Afghanistan.

In order to keep animals alive and avert large-scale impoverishment, it is possible to provide supplementary feeding with urea/molasses blocks. These are locally produced in Peshawar at a cost of between USD 210 to 215 per metric tonne. FAO has found that this solution would theoretically be possible; however, about 140 tonnes of blocks would suffice for 1.5 million sheep for one day and would cost USD \$30,000. Thus, supplementary feeding of livestock may not prove feasible on any meaningful scale without a large injection of cash.

UNOPS have bought up all the molasses blocks (6.000) in Kandahar and have distributed them to livestock owners; this small amount is all that is possible at this time without additional funding.

The next worst affected are farmers, who are increasingly facing a lack of irrigation water from dried up rivers and karezes. Kandahar farmers are already suffering from the drought, while farmers in Helmand may be increasingly affected if rain does not fall in the next few weeks.

UNOPS has started water conservation measures by building small dam walls in karezes, and will now field a mission to explore ways of expanding water conservation. In addition, in collaboration with MCI, OPS will review water supply from Kajaki Dam and will determine the extent of water supply to agricultural areas irrigated by the dam. A local consultant financed by FAO, Rome will survey the problem in more detail.

The Urban Situation

Water pumps in Kandahar City are either running dry--since the shallow pumps extend only about eight meters deep--or are supplying undrinkable water. Local sources assert that current conditions amount to the worst drought since 1961. United Nations agencies in the region say that water is available in Kandahar City at a depth below twenty metres. Thus, it can be assumed that the water table level has descended to a lower aquifer. Moreover, water levels at Kajaki dam are also at a record low and are twenty metres below normal for this time of year.

Urban dwellers are suffering from a lack of clean water and there is a possibility that even deepened wells will not provide water in the future. The World Health Organisation in Kandahar reports that this lack of safe water could result in a new wave of outbreaks of diarrhoea, dysentery, and related diseases. UNICEF and WHO will review the incidence of disease outbreaks in the region in order to get a realistic picture of changes in the health situation that are attributable to drought.

UNCHS (Habitat) in collaboration with UNICEF are updating information on the situation of wells and urban water supply. They will link up with DACAAR, the lead agency in water/sanitation in southern Afghanistan, to obtain information on the status of potable water supply in rural areas.

WFP is already providing emergency feeding for 30.000 families in areas of Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabul amounting to about 40% of the population of the areas covered. WFP Afghanistan has completed the first phase and will use in total 7.164 MT of food--200 kilos of wheat and 50 kilos of corn-soy blend per family. This will continue up to the end of April. Following this programme, based on the scale of need, WFP may also implement a series of food-for-work projects in these areas.

WFP VAM section's baseline survey in Kandahar City, conducted in April 1999, showed that all households are able to purchase enough food to meet their minimum food needs, but that the poorest households are without an able-bodied male and earn 73% of their combined food and non-food needs and 50% of the income earned by poor households with an able bodied man. The income gap between households without an able-bodied man and those with a working male is more marked in Kandahar City than other cities in Afghanistan. The diet of

poor households in Kandahar depends on cereals (70% wheat flour or bread and 10% rice). The city receives 50% of its cereal supplies from Pakistan and 40% from Kandahar province.

WFP is currently updating its survey of the region to reflect the latest situation with special reference to the effects on the Kochis in the Registan.

Local authorities in Kandahar will also be approached to help assess the situation and share their plans to cope with the drought.

Next Steps

The UN and NGOs will continue efforts to piece together a comprehensive picture of current and projected needs based on ongoing and planned assessments. These efforts will be co-ordinated locally through the RCB in Kandahar and channelled through the Task Force in Islamabad. In recognition of the regional nature of the problem, the Task Force is forging links with those organisations addressing drought conditions in Pakistan. It is intended that a comprehensive summary of needs will be available to donors by mid to late April.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Issue No.356

28 March 2000

NGO Concern Over Sanctions

The Afghan NGO Co-ordination Centre, the Islamic Co-ordination Council, and the Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief have written a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations. They have requested that a system be instituted to monitor the impact of the current Security Council sanctions on the Afghan population. They have also noted that expansion of the sanctions would increase the hardships faced by the Afghan people.

The Drought

The UN/NGO task force on the drought in southern Afghanistan met last week. The geographical extent of the current affected area is still defined as the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and Nimroz, with some effects seen in Zabul and Uruzgan.

So far, livestock owners of the Registan desert, who are mainly Kochis, are most seriously affected. Some have lost up to 100% of their stock. After review of historic animal numbers in the area, FAO has found that in 1997/98 there were an estimated four million sheep and goats owned by Kochis in Kandahar, Helmand and Nimroz. Total cattle, sheep, and goats are estimated at about 5.6 million.

FAO also found that while production of urea/molasses blocks in Peshawar would theoretically be possible, about 140 tonnes of blocks would suffice for 1.5 million sheep for one day and would cost USD

\$30,000. Thus, supplementary feeding of livestock may not prove feasible on any meaningful scale without a large injection of cash.

The situation is likely to get worse because the period for rain is rapidly ending, and the next rains are not expected until December.

UNOPS has started water conservation measures by building small dam walls in karezes, and will now field a mission to explore ways of expanding water conservation. In addition, in collaboration with MCI, OPS will review water supply from Kajaki Dam and will determine the extent of water supply to agricultural areas irrigated by the dam.

UNCHS (Habitat) in collaboration with UNICEF is updating information on the situation of wells and urban water supply. They will link up with DACAAR, the lead agency in water/sanitation in southern Afghanistan, to obtain information on the status of potable water supply in rural areas.

Given the lack of safe water in cities, and the possibility of disease outbreaks due to lack of safe water, UNICEF and WHO will review the incidence of disease outbreaks in the region in order to get a realistic picture of changes in the health situation which are attributable to drought.

Local authorities in Kandahar will also be approached to help assess the situation and share their plans to cope with the drought.

Health

International Tuberculosis Day

The World Health Organisation observed International Tuberculosis Day on 24 May. In all areas of the country, meetings focused on raising awareness about the disease.

The total number of tuberculosis cases in Afghanistan is over 133,000, of whom about 70% are female. Each year, at least 15,000 Afghans die due to TB.

In collaboration with several NGOs, WHO supports thirty tuberculosis facilities in Afghanistan, and provides training, medicine, and laboratory facilities. The World Food Programme assists in TB control by providing food to TB patients.

In 1993, WHO's Global Tuberculosis Programme declared TB a global emergency.

Polio Immunisation Days Scheduled

The first National Immunisation Days (NIDs) in Afghanistan for the year 2000 will be held from 1 to 3 May and 3 to 5 June. There will be another two rounds in October/November.

Afghanistan is one of fourteen countries where wild poliovirus still exists. UNICEF and WHO will appeal to all factions to observe days of tranquillity to allow NIDs to reach all the children of Afghanistan.

Water/Sanitation

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed a water supply project in Nahri-Seraj district of Helmand Province, with funding from DANIDA.

The fifteen wells dug will benefit 302 families, while over forty baths and latrines will benefit forty-two families. The community participated in site selection, and provided unskilled labour and some materials. The pumps provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Education

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan's (SCA) reconstruction work in Logar and Wardak after last year's earthquake is now completed. SCA has reconstructed ten schools in Wardak and has completed repairing forty-nine collapsed shallow wells in Wardak and Logar provinces.

The NGO Ariana Construction and Rehabilitation Unit (ACRU) has begun a six-month training program for NGO staff in Kabul city entitled "Institutional Development and Office Management for Afghan NGOs' Capacity Building."

The training aims to strengthen over 400 NGO staff in computer skills, accounting, and office management. The project is funded by CIDA.

Crops

FAO Crops have carried out irrigation of two farmers' wheat field demonstration plots in Balochan Qafacha and Yakh Karez villages of Dand District in Kandahar.

An FAO-run irrigation unit established in Peshawar in 1990 is dealing with flood protection and watershed management. Its main function is the promotion of technical standards and the rehabilitation of irrigation structures to sustain the livelihood of farmers and return of refugees to

minimise their dependency on food aid. The long-term objective is to redesign and reconstruct damaged irrigation systems and bring all available agricultural land back into cultivation. Rehabilitation of traditional irrigation systems is also concerned with the efficient use of water at the farmer/community level. The unit also concentrates on training and re-training local mirabs (water bailiffs) and key farmers in the efficient use of water to improve the productivity of agriculture land.

Disability

Female Physiotherapists Working in Kandahar

CDAP/UNOPS Female Physiotherapy Centre in Shega district of Kandahar has started functioning with the help of village elders. All arrangements for the Daman district Physiotherapy Centre have also been completed. Both centres can cover the physical disabilities of their localities. These centres could be used by disabled as well as non-disabled people for the sake of disability rehabilitation and prevention.

These physiotherapy centres will also be used as centres for dissemination of disability awareness, advocacy and basic health messages.

Afghan National Sign Language

A workshop for the development of Afghan sign language was jointly organised by CDAP/UNDP, SERVE/SHIP, and HIFA in Kabul. Nine hearing impaired people and three professional facilitators from HIFA Kabul, SHIP Jalalabad, and CDAP Peshawar shared their experiences on how to develop an Afghan National Sign Language

Dictionary of 2, 000 words and signs. Around 500 new signs were collected by hearing impaired people and were approved in this workshop.

The second phase of this workshop was arranged in Peshawar where the group finalised the '2000 words sign language dictionary', which will be mainly used to educate hearing impaired people.

Narcotics

In the UNDCP target districts of Maiwand, Ghorak and Khakrez in southern Afghanistan, about 200 farmers received the first training of the season on fertilising and top dressing the wheat crops.

In Maiwand, two spillways equipped with control gates on the Loya Wala canal were completed while the construction of other flood control structures on the same canal are in progress. The canal provides irrigation water for 7,000 hectares of agricultural lands in Sang-I-Sar area.

In Khakrez district, shura members recently agreed to allow women to attend the midwife training centres, which will soon be established in collaboration between UNDCP and WHO in the district. WHO will provide training equipment and allowances for the trainees while a UNDCP female community mobiliser will facilitate the training.

Refugees/Returnees

The first major repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan in 2000 began on 27 March.

Some 450 Afghans left Peshawar for the village of Ambar Khana in Batikot district, Nangahar province, eastern Af-

ghanistan. A second group of 350 is expected to follow on 29 March.

Since January, more than 3,000 refugees have returned to Afghanistan, and 2,517, 542 have returned from Pakistan since 1990. The refugees are returning to the relatively peaceful areas (Central, Eastern and Southern regions) of Afghanistan.

The refugees received a repatriation grant of \$100 per family, 300 kilograms of wheat (provided by WFP) and plastic sheets.

A UNHCR assessment team is in Karachi, which has a large urban refugee population. The first repatriation from Karachi to Kandahar is planned for next week.

UNHCR's offices in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif, will monitor respect for the rights of the returnees, as enshrined in the declarations of amnesties. These include non-discrimination because of religion, ethnic origin, and gender; access to immovable property and land; and exemption from conscription for at least one year following return.

UNHCR is also undertaking projects designed to meet the most pressing needs of the returnees during the initial re-integration phase primarily in the areas of shelter and potable water.

In 1999, more than 92,000 Afghan refugees returned home from Pakistan and more than 77,000 from Iran.

There are 2.6 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, making Afghans the single largest refugee group in the world for the last twenty-one years.

Some 200,000 Afghan refugees are expected to repatriate from Pakistan and Iran this year.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.355

21 March 2000

Funding

The government of Turkey has donated \$15,000 in medical supplies to the Ataturk Children's Hospital in Kabul. The equipment includes an ambulance, an oxygen machine, and laboratory research materials.

The Drought

The UN/NGO task force on the drought in southern Afghanistan met last week. The geographical extent of the current affected area was defined as the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, and Nimroz, with some effects seen in Zabul and Uruzgan. So far, livestock owners of the Registan desert, who are mainly Kochis, are most seriously affected. Some have lost up to 100% of their stock. The next worst affected are farmers, who are increasingly facing a lack of irrigation water from dried up rivers and karezes. Kandahar farmers are already suffering from the drought, while farmers in Helmand may be increasingly affected if rain does not fall in the next few weeks. Finally, urban dwellers are suffering from a lack of clean water and there is a possibility that even deepened wells will not provide water in the future. This lack of safe water could result in disease outbreaks.

The situation is likely to get worse because the period for rain is rapidly ending, and the next rains are not expected until December.

WFP is already providing emergency feeding for 30,000 families in areas

of Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabul amounting to about 40% of the population of the areas covered. WFP Afghanistan has completed the first phase and will use in total 7,164 MT of food--200 kilos of wheat and 50 kilos of corn-soy blend per family. This will continue up to the end of April. WFP may also implement a series of food-for-work projects in these areas.

For livestock, UNOPS have bought up all the molasses blocks (6,000) in Kandahar and have distributed them to livestock owners; this small amount is all that is possible at this time. UNOPS has also started water conservation measures by building small dam walls in karezes, and will continue to promote water conservation.

Numbers of people and livestock affected are not yet known. WFP is currently updating its survey of the region to reflect the latest situation with special reference to the effects on the Kochis in the Registan. Additional information is expected via FAO Kandahar. FAO, Rome, have offered to finance a local consultant to survey the problem in more detail to help plan a response. FAO Livestock is reviewing historic animal numbers in the area and establishing stocks and manufacturing possibilities of urea/molasses blocks. UNCHS (Habitat) is reviewing the urban water supply situation.

Food Aid/Food Security

WFP Afghanistan has recently approved five new food-for-work (FFW) projects. In Kabul, FFW will be used for well construction and provision of 86 hand pumps, providing wages to 34 male labourers with 36 MT of wheat. The project will benefit an estimated 10,000 people. In Nangahar, a 75 metric ton FFW project for malaria control and construction of an MCH clinic will directly benefit 76 male labourers and 65 female health educators. In addition, in Nangahar, FFW will be used to re-excavate irrigation canals and to build a flood control dam, providing 43 MT of wheat to 90 male labourers and irrigated water to 7,000 jeribs of land. A FFW project to rehabilitate the water supply in Faizabad hospital will directly benefit 38 male labourers with seven MT of wheat, and will ensure a regular water supply to patients in the hospital. Through FFW, 62 male labourers, who will be paid 39 MT of wheat, will construct an MCH clinic in Kandahar.

WFP Afghanistan has committed 7,500 MT of wheat to work with UNHCR to repatriate 200,000 Afghans in 2000. It is expected that 100,000 people will return from Pakistan and 100,000 from Iran. WFP and HCR are beginning preparations for the imminent return of 3,000 Afghans per week from Iran in early April.

The Afghan NGO Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan (AREA) has provided assistance to more than 1,000 families in Kabul displaced from Shamali during last summer's fighting.

AREA distributed iftari packages for 600 families for four days, which provided some 16,800 beneficiaries with wheat flour, cooking oil, and rice. In addition, a

large number of families were also provided with zakat. The funding for this assistance was made possible by Muslim Aid (UK).

In addition, distribution of food and non-food items to the most vulnerable families from Shomali started in early March with funding from Muslime Helfen (Germany). More than 500 families will benefit during the three-month project.

Health

Measles

In Kunduz, WHO investigated an outbreak of measles among internally displaced persons. A WHO team examined twenty-one patients under five years, of whom fifteen had measles. The team has provided medical supplies. The families of the children, about fifty, reside in a small school with three families per room. WHO in Kunduz province provided guidance to the MoPH Polyclinic and ARCS clinic on managing and preventing communicable diseases.

In Badakhshan, UN agencies and NGOs met at Faizabad Public Health Hospital to discuss the measles outbreak in that province. An outbreak in Kishem District reportedly affected 500 persons and killed thirty-five, while a joint MoPH and MSF medical team has reported that a measles outbreak in Gharan area of Ishkashim District has killed forty children.

In Takhar, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) reports that the measles epidemic is still raging with undiminished strength. Six health teams from the SCA are vaccinating children in villages in the districts of Taloqan, Eshklamesh, and Farkhar. From Farkhar, the deaths of sixteen children have been reported.

There is still a lack of anti-measles vaccine. In addition to the vaccinations, the health teams are distributing vitamin A to affected children.

Training

In collaboration with the MoPH in Jalalabad, WHO conducted the first batch two-week EPI training for thirteen health workers in Shinwar. The office also conducted a three-week training course for twenty traditional birth attendants (TBAs) under the umbrella of the Greater Azro Initiative in Hesarak District of Nangahar province.

Medical Supplies

WHO has provided medical supplies to three health centres and two hospitals in the eastern region and distributed WFP food to seventy-five patients. In the north, WHO provided anti-TB, anti-ARI drugs and medical supplies to Faizabad hospital and to Yaftal health centre and medical supplies to Kunduz MoPH Regional Hospital.

Education

The CDAP/UNOPS community based education programme in Kandahar launched a parents' meeting campaign. These meetings bring together students, parents, teachers, local shura members, and CDAP/UNOPS field workers to share views and responsibilities for management and promotion of ongoing education of boys and girls. They will also establish education committees within existing village shuras to manage community-based schools. More parents' meetings are planned to insure the sustainability and quality of the ongoing education programme.

UNHCR Pakistan has provided one-time financial assistance of five million rupees (\$100,000) to the new Afghan University in Peshawar to help provide increased access and improve the quality of higher education at the only institution of its kind for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Run by Afghans for Afghans, the university opened in April 1999 following the merger of five Peshawar-based Afghan colleges. Today it has 1,529 students, including 576 women. For Afghan refugee women, the University is one of the very few outlets that offer access to post-secondary education in Pakistan.

The Government of Pakistan through its Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR) has played an important role in the establishment of the new Afghan University. It has already contributed 4.2 million rupees to keep the university going. To encourage the continuation of this partnership, UNHCR is channelling its contribution through the CAR's Education Cell.

UNHCR's assistance will be used to purchase laboratory equipment for the women's wing of the Faculty of Medicine, to buy furniture for female students and to renovate the building housing the women's wing, and to pay salaries of some essential teaching staff.

The number of refugee women and girls participating in UNHCR-funded education programmes in Pakistan has grown dramatically over the past few years, suggesting a fundamental change in refugees' attitudes. In 1999, some 116,700 students attended UNHCR-funded schools in the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, and Punjab provinces, of whom 33 per cent were girls. Overall registration rose by 11 per cent and female enrolment went up by 36 per cent.

Disability

Income Generation/ Special Education

The CDAP/UNOPS Employment Support Section has established two vocational training courses in tailoring for disabled people in Taloqan. These courses will enable about thirty disabled women and men to make a living by running small tailoring shops within their own villages.

A special education training course has been arranged by CDAP/UNOPS in Takhar for female field workers. Completion of this course will enable them to train disabled women, boys, and girls in sign language and Braille, which is a prerequisite for integration of deaf and blind children into mainstream schools. The field workers carry out home visits to the disabled, and refer special cases, which are beyond their capacity, to other services available in the region.

Agriculture

Crops

FAO irrigated thirty jeribs of improved wheat on the Improved Seed Enterprise (ISE) foundation seed farm in western Afghanistan and weeded fifty jeribs of wheat in Rawzabagh foundation seed farm in Herat Province.

Due to lack of an in-country institution, which would be capable of ensuring the selection and maintenance of pure seed varieties, most farmers reproduce their own seed from previous stocks. Their lack of technical knowledge results in poor quality seed, nor do they know how to prevent cross-pollination and the reproduction of seed-borne diseases. Consequently, quality,

yields, and market value are low. FAO therefore established a regional capacity to produce and maintain stocks of pure foundation seeds in four agro-ecological zones in Afghanistan.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

24/3-2000

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.354

14 March 2000

Funding

The Government of Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has pledged \$CAN 300,000 to UNOCHA. The funds are earmarked for the training initiative for human rights and rights-based programming in Afghanistan.

Women's Day

All four UNICEF sub-offices in Afghanistan and the UNICEF Country Office in Islamabad observed International Women's Day 2000. In the western Afghan city of Herat, two events were held. One was a gathering at the Guzara health clinic, where female health workers, female staff of NGOs, and village women discussed women's health care, the situation of women in female-headed households, and education of girls. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were introduced and discussed. The second gathering was of teachers and students in home-based schools, where again, the CRC and CEDAW, education for girls, health care for women, and female-headed households were the topics of discussion.

In Kabul, a two-hour women's meeting was held at Malalai Hospital. About 60 women from NGOs and the UN attended. A UNICEF Protection Officer spoke about women's rights and CEDAW.

Health

Measles

Five regions in Afghanistan (northern, western, northeastern, central, and south-eastern) have reported measles outbreaks since January of this year. According to WHO, the total number of deaths stands at 507, with more than two-thirds of these fatalities in the central highlands and the southeast. The outbreak is continuing to spread to more remote areas, of these two regions.

New outbreaks have occurred in Sheghan and Gharan districts of Badakhshan (following outbreaks reported in other areas of the province) and in the area of Chail Dukhtaran in Kunduz.

Polio

A successful meeting of several countries in South and Southeast Asia concluded in Kathmandu on 3 March. From Afghanistan and Pakistan, UNICEF and WHO staff and government officials attended this first time gathering, which focused on cross-border issues in the final battle to eradicate polio.

Disease Incidence

The WHO supported Malaria Control Programme in the Central region of Afghanistan excluding Wardak, Kapisa and Parwan provinces has reported 15,359 positive cases of malaria during 1999. 3.4% out of the total number were positive for plasmo-

diurn falciparum--the most fatal type of malaria.

In addition, 17,313 new cases of cutaneous leishmaniasis have been reported to WHO Kabul during 1999.

As part of preventive and protective measures, WHO has provided 20,100 impregnated bed-nets on a subsidised rate for the malaria and leishmania control programme in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar.

During the same period, the National TB Institute of MoPH has reported 335 TB cases, of whom 224 were female.

Maternal Health

A joint UNICEF/MOPH/RRD team visited Farah province to monitor EP fixed centres and water and sanitation projects. The provincial Governor pledged support for re-establishing maternal and women's health facilities.

Seven districts of Balkh province and four areas around Andkhoy have been selected for safe motherhood and primary health care activities in collaboration with MoPH and Save the Children (US).

Assistance for Hairatan

In a joint meeting of UN agencies and NGOs, chaired by the Foreign Affairs Department (FAD), issues such as provision of humanitarian assistance to Hairatan District and support to a newly established orphanage in Mazar City for 220 children were discussed. FAD requested the provision of food, drinking water, and medicine for Hairatan inhabitants. A joint rapid need assessment of the Hairatan situation will be carried out by the above mentioned agencies and an action plan prepared for the district.

Responding to a request, WHO will be providing ARI supplies and training ten traditional birth attendants in Hairatan District.

Water and Sanitation

Through UNICEF assistance, two hundred and fifty residents of Timorak village of Chabolk district in Balkh province now have potable water, thanks to the installation of one handpump.

In Herat and Badghis provinces, sixteen handpumps were installed on bore wells, thereby providing safe drinking water to 4,000 people.

In the self-help sanitation project in Guzara district of Herat province, 30 sets of family sanitary latrines (FSL) were constructed, with many more families expressing their interest in purchasing FSL. This is thought to be the result of intensive dissemination of health and hygiene messages to the community through RRD mobilisers. RRD sells these latrines to communities at half the actual cost.

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed a water supply and environmental sanitation project in Deh Bala, Nangahar Province. The project has benefited over 400 families with fifteen wells and fifty baths and latrines. The community provided unskilled labour and some materials. The hand pumps provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Training

In close collaboration with MoPH, WHO conducted a two-week training course for

EPI Health Workers in Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Faizabad, while in Ghazni WHO completed a training course for twenty vaccinators. In Mazar-i-Sharif, WHO completed two TBA training courses in Dawlat Abad and Khulm districts of Balkh and Samangan provinces. WHO in Faizabad completed a TB training course and provided TB drugs to Baharak and Jurm Districts TB Centres.

Fifteen female health educators employed by WHO in Jalalabad visited 423 families consisting of 2,620 persons during the week and conveyed health messages to the families.

Education

Five NGOs and three UN agencies participated in a meeting of the Kabul-based Education Coordination Committee. The UNICEF-sponsored project of collecting and cataloguing all materials used in primary education in Afghanistan by NGOs, the authorities, and others was explained. These materials will be displayed from 19-21 April in a symposium in Peshawar, which will also discuss various education-related issues.

In Kandahar, a UNICEF education staff member met with the director of education to follow up on the Governor's suggestion that girls' education be considered. Pre-conditions for the opening of formal girls' schools were proposed by the Governor's office: girls' schools must be in separate buildings from boys' schools, all the teachers must be women; and transportation must be provided for both the students and the teachers. Discussions will continue.

Six radio episodes on health, education, the environment and moral values have been developed and aired by a youth

group in Mazar. Save the Children UK, with UNICEF support, has guided the youth group in developing the radio programme for dissemination of "facts for life" messages. Radio Shari'at has also cooperated in this project, which may expand in 2000.

Agriculture

Livestock

The drought affecting southern Afghanistan is continuing to take a toll on livestock in the region. New reports, as yet unconfirmed, have been received that the drought is now affecting animals in Farah Province.

After assessment in districts of Kandahar and Zabul, a technical mission has reported that the mortality rate of sheep varied between 38% in Shinkay district and 63% in Shemolzai district.

Crops

A pilot project to promote kitchen gardens for women was implemented by UNCHS (Habitat) and the NGOs Solidarite and Ibn Sina in Bamiyan City. Within basic health units (BHUs) and hospitals, the project has established model kitchen gardens to train female outpatients in vegetable production and kitchen garden management. In addition, they also received training on nutritional issues concerning vegetables such as nutritional status, preparation of vegetable-based baby foods, cottage processing and preservation methods.

Nearly 200 model kitchen gardens were established by selected women, who received regular technical backstopping from women extension workers to ensure high technical standards in the management of their kitchen gardens. Seventy women

were trained in the basic principles of quality vegetable seed production to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme.

It is expected that such projects have the potential to improve family and child nutrition.

Narcotics

Construction of the Ghorak District Health Clinic was completed by an Afghan NGO with UNDCP funds. On 6 March, the building was handed over to the Afghan NGO Ibn-e-Sina to establish a Basic Health Clinic there to provide health care service to the community. The clinic provides health care for 15,000 people living in fifty villages of the district. The WHO Regional Office in Kandahar will support the clinic.

Construction of the building was part of the Ghorak District Drug Control Action Plan. Hours away from Kandahar City, the district previously had no clinic. The new clinic has a medical doctor, pharmacist, vaccination branch, and dressing facilities. The building has six rooms equipped with water supply, electrification, and sanitation facilities.

Rehabilitation assistance

In the Khowja Ghar reconstruction effort in Takkar Porvince, Shelter Now International has completed the distribution of roofing materials to 473 families in twenty-one villages in the areas of Khowja Ghar and Hazar Bagh. Upon completion of the roof, individuals receive a door and a window.

During the week UNCHS (Habitat), Kandahar continued to support communities in education, health and income generation through its established nine Community Fora (six for men and three for

women). 422 patients visited the health clinics of Community Fora in districts 1, 3, 4, and 5 and were treated. The girls' primary schools and income generation enterprises such as tailoring, hat weaving, and embroidery were progressing well in women's Community Fora in districts 1, 2, and 6.

Refugees/Returnees

Pakistan

Voluntary repatriation from Pakistan is slowly starting and during the week three families (17 persons) returned from Baluchistan and 65 families (208 persons) returned from NWFP. They received their standard repatriation-grants (wheat, cash for transportation and plastic sheeting).

Iran

During the week, some 108 families (532 persons) who had returned with UNHCR assistance from Iran to Farah earlier were provided the wheat portion of their repatriation-grant in Farah city. In preparation of the expected voluntary repatriation from Iran, the planned holding area in Islam-Qala and the transit centre in Herat were surveyed to identify the necessary inputs required before the start of the operation.

While preparations are underway for the start of the voluntary repatriation programme as envisaged with the "Joint Programme," recently agreed between Iran and UNHCR, forcible returns of Afghans continue unabated. During last week alone, 15 families (75 persons) and 1,800 Afghans without family-members were deported through the border at Naloki (Nimroz) and

1,200 Afghans were forcibly returned through Islam-Qala (Herat).

Assistance to Returnees

Activities to address the basic needs of Afghans who returned in late 1999 are ongoing. Two schools for children of returnee families in Garmser district of Helmand and shelter reconstruction projects (through food for work and by providing building materials and tools) for 355 returnee families in Farah province have been successfully completed during the week. Monitoring of shelter projects for returnees in Nangahar (Behsud and Khewa) has been undertaken and projects for provision of drinking water for returnees and returnee-impacted communities are underway in Ghulran district of Herat.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

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Issue No.353

Funding

To date a total of USD 27.5 million has been pledged to Afghanistan. Of this, USD 21.6 million is in response to the Appeal. This represents ten percent of the total funding (USD 221 million) requested through the Appeal.

Of this amount, the greatest proportion has been pledged for the alleviation of human suffering, and for Mine Action in particular.

In the lead so far among donors is Sweden, with a contribution of over USD ten million.

Population Survey in Kabul

With support from UNOCHA, the Central Statistics Office, Kabul has undertaken a new population survey. Using door-to-door visits, surveyors over the course of five months conducted the survey to provide more reliable information on the demography of greater Kabul City.

The survey has found that there has been a significant increase in the total population of the city, now put at 1.78 million. The survey also found a high degree of mobility among the resident population, with one in five families reporting a move within the past six months. The report also confirmed that almost one-third of the families resident in the city had in-migrated to the city in recent years. Finally, the survey also found that almost half of the fami-

lies in the city now inhabit homes that are unregistered.

The full results of the survey are now being finalised and printed.

Mission

A UNHCR Inspection mission will be visiting this region from 4 to 16 March and will be meeting with the Heads of UN Agencies and will be visiting Afghanistan. Mr. Nicolas Morris, Inspector General of UNHCR in Geneva, will head the mission.

Food Security/Food Aid

Jalalabad Bakery

Several of the WFP bakeries scheduled to provide heavily subsidised bread to Jalalabad's most vulnerable families began operations on Friday 3 March; the remaining bakeries are expected to begin functioning sometime this week. The project is planned to operate through 31 May, covering the pre-harvest season, for 21,450 of the most vulnerable households in the city. WFP has approved the use of 4,153 MT of wheat for the three-month duration of the project.

Kandahar

The emergency operation in this region, covering districts in Helmand, Kandahar, including Kandahar city, and one district in Zabul province, has thus far distributed

1,698 MT of wheat and 424 MT of CSB to 20,425 of the most vulnerable households.

VAM Afghanistan conducted a baseline survey in Kandahar City in April 1999. The survey indicated that the minimum income level per person per month needed to meet the cost of minimum food needs in 1999 was US\$3.92. While all households are able to purchase enough food to meet their minimum food needs, the poorest households are without an able-bodied male and earn 73% of their combined food and non-food needs and 50% of the income earned by poor households with an able bodied man. The income gap between households without an able-bodied man and those with a working male is more marked in Kandahar City than other cities in Afghanistan. The diet of poor households in Kandahar depends on cereals (70% wheat flour or bread and 10% rice). The city receives 50% of its cereal supplies from Pakistan and 40% from Kandahar province.

Health

Measles

Kunduz: In response to reports of a measles outbreak from Chail Dukhtraran area of Kunduz province, a WHO/MSF joint medical team visited the area where 40 families are living out of which 16 are IDPs from Archi and Bangi districts. The disease affected eleven children and killed two. The team treated the cases with antibiotics and Vitamin A provided by UNICEF and advised EPI fixed centres to immunise all children adjacent to the area.

In addition, a measles outbreak was reported from Khanabad district of Kunduz.

A WHO/MSF team visiting the area found a few cases, but the outbreak had not

spread and immunisation was controlling the situation.

Badakhshan: WHO, MoPH, UNICEF, and NGOs responded to two measles outbreaks in Darwaz and Khwahan. WHO provided medicine to the medical team sent by MoPH Badakhshan to Khwahan district. The NGO FOCUS carried medical supplies through Karugh, Tajikistan and back across the Amu River to Darwaz District of Badakhshan. They reported that 323 people have died because of measles outbreak in 24 villages of the district.

Darra Souf: According to reports WHO received on 28 February 2000 from Darra Souf (Samangan province), the measles outbreak in nine villages has affected 1920 persons, and has killed 256. The total population of the nine villages is 26,000 people. In a joint response by WHO, UNICEF, and UNOCHA, medical supplies were sent from Kabul to Yakawlang, Bamyan province from where a team of doctors of the Afghan NGO Shuhada travelled to the area on foot.

Herat: In Robati Sangi, Herat Province, a measles outbreak killed 79 children during the last two weeks. It affected 28 villages with a population of 20,400 persons. In a joint meeting of WHO/UNICEF/MOPH and health NGOs, a plan for measles outbreak response was prepared and a medical team was sent to the area.

Health Sector Planning Workshops

WHO in Jalalabad, Ghazni, Kunduz, and Kandahar conducted three-day health sector planning workshops aimed at reviewing the Plan of Action of 1999 and preparing an Action Plan for 2000. Public health offi-

cials, UN agencies, and NGOs attended the workshops.

Training

WHO conducted a one-week training course for 20 Village Health Volunteers in Chardehi Village of Batikot district, Nangarhar province. In addition, WHO held two separate orientation sessions in Herat Regional and Farah Provincial Hospitals, which fifteen trainees from the sentinel sites and focal points of AFP surveillance system attended.

UNHCR, together with WHO will support a training programme, through which 150 women will be trained in traditional birth attendants in six districts of Kabul and Logar provinces, in collaboration with MoPH.

Under the auspices of UNICEF, the training of eleven midwives from Logar province is continuing. In a meeting between UNICEF and the Directors of MCH and Malalai Maternity Hospital, it was agreed that the trainees would receive 15 days practical work in MCH clinics following the completion of training on 4 March.

UNICEF will develop Puli Alam hospital as a Basic Health Unit with beds, since the number of visitors to this hospital is constantly increasing. The main referral hospital in Logar remains in Barakibarak.

Water and Sanitation

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed water supply and environmental sanitation projects in Baraki and Pul-i-Alam districts of Logar Province. These two projects have benefited over 900 families. The commu-

nity provided unskilled labour and some materials. The materials provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Agriculture

Livestock

The drought affecting southern Afghanistan is continuing to take a toll on livestock in the region. New reports, as yet unconfirmed, have been received that the drought is now affecting animals in Farah Province.

In Dand District of Kandahar, 14 farmers received technical training regarding cattle management and nutrition. Refresher Training courses are held for Veterinary Field Unit (VFU) veterinarians, assistant veterinarians and paraveterinarians. These courses aim at updating the technical knowledge of vets and paravets. In three weeks training courses, the main subjects covered are epidemiology and poultry disease, reproduction, nutrition, and parasitic and bacterial diseases, in addition to surgical interventions.

Training of Basic Veterinary Workers (BVWs) is jointly undertaken by VFU implementing partners (IPs). The BVW training programme is carried out by field VFU vets for a week per annum.

Crops

FAO Crops has published a bi-lingual (English and Dari) publication on *Generating Income from Bee-keeping in Afghanistan*. It covers types of bee species, the control of bee diseases and the generation of income from beekeeping.

The publication was written to support a training course for Afghan female and male beekeepers at the Honey Bee Research Institute, National Agricultural Research Centre in Islamabad in July 1999. In 1998, a FAO consultant investigated the potential for FAO to provide technical support to Afghan apiculture. It was discovered that a large portion of beekeeping concentrated on honey production, and that practitioners were unaware of the value of beeswax and the production of value added bee products.

The project and cost of the publication was funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

The document is available at FAO Crops for Afghanistan. For further information, please contact FAO Crops at sharif@isb.comsats.net.pk.

Narcotics

On 7 March, local authorities in Kandahar burned 4,500 kilos of hashish and 355 kilos of heroin on the outskirts of Kandahar City.

Rehabilitation assistance

In southern Afghanistan, UNHCR provided support for a sanitation project implemented by an Afghan NGO (SAS) in Khaki Jabar, aimed at improving the status of karezes to facilitate irrigation of agricultural lands in the approaching growing season for returnee families in the area.

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Issue No.352

29 February 2000

IDPs in Kabul

Health

Efforts by UN and other agencies to monitor conditions and provide support for displaced families in the region continue. Of the tens of thousands of people who were initially forced to leave their villages and travel to Kabul in August, a significant proportion travelled on to Pakistan before the onset of winter. In Kabul, regular food inputs from WFP for some 3,000 vulnerable families housed in the ex-Soviet Embassy have been matched by joint UN/NGO non-food distributions. In addition, UNICEF, together with NGOs, has supported the provision of basic services (safe water, health care, and education) and undertaken winterisation measures to buildings in the compound.

The bulk of the displaced population still in Kabul continue to reside in the homes of relatives, who are themselves often poor and vulnerable. To address these needs, an ECHO-funded programme has been launched in the city to provide employment for some 4,000 families during the winter.

In addition to practical support for the displaced, the UN is assessing the possibility for displaced communities to return to their villages of origin as soon as possible, to avoid greater dependence on external assistance.

Diseases

Herat: In close collaboration with MoPH, UNICEF and NPO/RRAA, WHO has prepared and implemented a plan to respond to the response measles outbreak in Kushk Rabat Sangi District of Herat province. The outbreak occurred in 28 villages and involved over 100 cases and 45 deaths. A measles vaccination campaign will be undertaken in 33 surrounding villages with a total population of 15,950.

UNICEF will provide 3,250 doses of measles vaccine, medical supplies, and Vitamin A to all affected and high-risk villages in the district.

Hazarajat: AWHO team is investigating the reported outbreak of measles in Yakawlang and Darra Souf. The team will visit affected villages, collect information from health facilities and will study the clinical picture of the disease as well as environmental conditions. The team is also transporting medical supplies and treatment guidelines to be given to the affected population.

Badakhshan: The WHO office provided medical supplies to medical teams of MoPH in Badakhshan, who are travelling to Darwaz and Khwahan districts to cope with the outbreak of measles, which reportedly caused the deaths of over 100 children.

Mission

UNICEF Jalalabad went to Kunar province to monitor survival related activities in Noorgal, Chawkai, Narang, Asadabad, and Shegal districts, with a focus on health facilities.

The EPI teams in the province provide immunisation in the fixed centres twice a week, and during the remaining four days of the week all vaccinators go to villages (mostly located in valleys and mountains) for outreach immunisation. In some cases, the vaccinators have to walk for 2-3 hours to reach target areas. The main health problems reported from this area are malaria and acute respiratory infections.

Training

WHO conducted two two-week^a refresher-training courses on immunisation for vaccinators in Herat Regional Hospital for 25 male and 17 female vaccinators.

In Faizabad, WHO conducted a three-day training course on ARI (Acute Respiratory Infections) at Faizabad Hospital, in addition to a two-week training course on tuberculosis.

In Mazar-i-Sharif WHO successfully completed three training courses for 22 TBAs in Kod-e-Burq, Balkh, and Dawlatabad districts of Balkh province.

In Kunduz, WHO conducted a three-day Regional Health Sector Planning Workshop and prepared an Action Plan for 2000 for northeastern region. Participants focused attention on situation analysis, HIS reporting system, updated provincial health profiles, and health activities.

Water and Sanitation

Due to the worst drought since 1961 in southern Afghanistan, the water table in Kandahar region is alarmingly low. Unless it rains this could produce a serious lack of drinking water for the city as recently installed pumps run dry. WHO reports that this lack of safe water could result in a new wave of outbreaks of diarrhoea, dysentery, and related diseases.

In UNICEF's Water and Environmental Sanitation Programme, nine hand pumps were installed in Enjil and Laman districts of Herat and Badghis provinces to provide safe drinking water to some 2,500 people of the locality. Five hundred people in Enjil and Guzara districts were reached with health hygiene messages by RRD mobilisers. They were encouraged to buy low cost family sanitary latrine sets from self-help sanitation centre in Guzara.

In Asadabad, Kunar Province, the construction work on the reservoir of Shinkorak water supply project has restarted. The work was stopped due to cold weather.

In Kabul Province, the construction work of Koti-e-Ashro and Shina piped water supplies are under way by RWSD of GRRD and the concerned communities.

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed water supply projects in Khogiani and Deh Bala districts (Nangahar Province); Musa Qala district (Helmand); Shah Wali Kot district (Kandahar); and Ander district (Ghazni). These five projects have provided over 250 wells benefiting almost 6,000 families. In addition over 400 baths and over 400 latrines were constructed to benefit over 350 families. The community participated in site selection, and provided

unskilled labour and some materials. The pumps provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Disability

Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal (SGAA) has issued its new catalogue for the year 2000. The catalogue features wheelchairs, walking aids, and orthopaedic devices, all made and available in the SGAA workshop in Jalalabad. The products are continuously tested and improved for use in SGAA's orthopaedic workshops and physiotherapy clinics.

SGAA can be contacted at 10 Park Avenue 800 T, PO Box 969, University Town, Peshawar; or at the Public Health Hospital No. 1, Jalalabad; or by email at sgaa@brain.net.pk

Agriculture

Livestock

FAO's livestock programme has printed the new issue of the *Livestock Health and Production Newsletter* (Volume 3, Issue 4). The publication is available from FAO in Dari, Pashto, and English.

During the past week, the Kochi survey team treated and de-wormed 558 animals in Farah province, vaccinated 901 animals against Pest des Petits diseases, and examined 58 faecal samples for Endoparasites.

Afghanistan still has a large population of nomadic livestock owners. A mobile service and investigation team was set up by FAO to identify problems and provide veterinary services to nomads. The

team has surveyed selected districts in southern and southeast Afghanistan.

Crops

FAO trained 366 local community farmers in plant protection for better implementation of the integrated pest management (IPM) programme in parts of Herat and Farah Provinces.

This programme uses demonstrations to train community trainers (CTs) and farmers in technical skills and management of horticulture crops within their own traditional integrated farming systems. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 farmers per province receive training each year. In the western region, Herat, Badghis and Farah, the number of farmers trained is 9,000 while these programmes are estimated to reach up to 27,000 farmers indirectly in those areas.

Rehabilitation assistance

The distribution of mulberry saplings by UNOPS/ARR in Pushtoon Zarghoon, Enjil, Gozara, Ghorian and Zindajan districts of Herat province continues. Each sapling costs Afs. 2000. In addition, preparation is going on for silk worm-egg boxes for the year 2000.

Refugees/Returnees

Voluntary repatriation from Iran

UNHCR and the Iranian government have agreed on ways of facilitating the repatriation of Afghan refugees remaining in Iran, in a move designed to better organise the return process and to put an end to deportations. The current agreement, which comes into force in April, gives Afghan refugees

without proper documents six months to come forward and either apply for return or make a case for remaining in Iran. Under the agreement, signed in Teheran last week by the UNHCR representative and the head of Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, UNHCR will be fully involved in the voluntary repatriation process as well as in decisions on the status of those not wishing to return to Afghanistan. In the meantime, UNHCR Afghanistan is jointly planning with UN agencies and NGOs in order to prepare for the commencement of the operation on the Afghan side.

Voluntary repatriation from Pakistan

On 23 February, a meeting of the Tripartite Repatriation Commission (TRC) was held in Kabul to review repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. The meeting was hosted by the Taliban repatriation minister, Maulana Abdul Raqib and attended by a delegation of the Government of Pakistan, led by the Secretary -Minister for States and Frontier Region, as well as the offices of UNHCR Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Returning refugees

Some 33 families (200 persons) returning to Afghanistan from NWFP (Pakistan) received their repatriation-grant in Jalalabad.

Reintegration assistance

Projects for shelter rehabilitation assistance to Afghans who returned in late 1999 continued to be implemented, namely for returnee families in Farah province, and in Bati Kot district of Nangahar, where a shelter project for 107 returnee families will be completed during the week.

New Brochure: Strategic Framework

The Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan has printed a simple tri-lingual brochure (Dari, Pashto, English) outlining the objectives and principles of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan. For copies, please contact ariana.yaftali@undp.org

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Issue No.351

22 February 2000

Pledges and Contributions

The government of Canada has pledged US\$4,151,183 to support mine action, community development, aircraft operations, education, human rights and widows' feeding programmes in Afghanistan.

Bombing in Panjshir

The Secretary-General deplores the indiscriminate bombing in the Panjshir Valley, on 14 February. These bombings resulted in the death of 8 persons, and have impeded UN efforts to get assistance to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the area. One of the bombs fell 200 meters from the UN office in the Bazarak/ Changaram while others fell nearby.

The Secretary-General is also concerned that civilians are still being deliberately targeted in different frontlines. He appeals to all parties involved to respect the rights of non-combatants to be treated as civilians as well as their right to receive humanitarian assistance. He reiterates his call on all parties to cooperate with the United Nations in the provision of relief assistance for affected populations.

SIDA Mission to Afghanistan

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) fielded a 12-day mission to Kandahar, Kabul and Jalalabad on 19 February. The mission is currently visiting mine action, disabled and

education support programmes, FAO crops and livestock projects, and health services.

Education

The Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) has approved the employment of female teachers, supervisors and monitors in UNICEF-supported home-schools in Laghman and Kunar. Based on a Memorandum of Understanding, signed between RRD eastern region and UNICEF, 290 schools are being supported by the agency.

Nearly 40 primary schools are initiated and supported by the Comprehensive Disabled Afghan Programme (CDAP), PEACE partners and rural communities in Kandahar and Farah provinces.

UNCHS and Community Fora are also supporting eight schools in Kandahar city. They provide books and stationery for over 770 girls and boys in these schools.

Health

Over 15 children have died in the new measles epidemic in Farkhar and Kalafgan districts of Takhar Province. Measles have also been found in other locations of Takhar. Two health teams from Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) have vaccinated over 1,000 children in Kalafgan so far.

Another outbreak of the disease in Samangan Province has also been reported.

Return of Qualified Afghan Nationals

Under an IOM-initiated pilot project, nine female and one male Afghan medical professionals have been relocated to work in the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)-supported health clinics in Afghanistan. IOM provides assistance for relocation and training to a total of 25 Afghan medical professionals, primarily women.

Ten returnees have been employed to work for clinics in rural areas in Takhar, Kapisa, Laghman, Kabul, Wardak, Logar and Ghazni provinces. The process of recruiting another ten health workers under the same project is underway.

Meetings

Health issues, e.g. management and prevention of seasonal diseases, measles and Acute Respiratory Diseases, were discussed in a Health Coordination Meeting at Mir-wais Hospital in Kandahar last week.

Following meetings with various agencies and NGOs, WHO Mazar conducted a workshop for all regional public health directors and provincial representatives in the health sector to prepare a comprehensive Action Plan for 2000.

Missions

A UNICEF mission visited Farah province from 6 to 8 February. The objectives of the mission were to explain the new country programme to counterparts in the UNICEF focused provinces in 2000, and to assess the situation of the provincial hospital with a view to initiate Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) and other MCH services.

WHO visited Helmand province and supervised EPI training in addition to other health activities.

A WHO/UNICEF joint team visited Balkh, Dawlatabad and Charbulak districts and supervised anti-TB training, EPI routine activities, ARI and measles cases, and water and sanitation projects in the area.

WHO visited health facilities in Ghazni and monitored the ongoing nutrition programme for malnourished children, and lactating and pregnant women.

Medical supplies

WHO distributed drugs and other medical and surgical supplies to Tirinkot Provincial Hospital, Malaria Reference Centres in Kandahar, Ghazni, Paktika, Fariyab and Kunduz provinces.

Training

The UNICEF-supported three-month training of midwives (from Logar province) is ongoing in the Malalai Maternity Hospital in Kabul. All trained midwives will work in the SMI programme in Logar.

WHO conducted a refresher training course on immunization for 23 EPI health workers in Kandahar, and a workshop on Safe Motherhood Initiative for female doctors, midwives and Traditional Birth attendants (TBAs) in Fariyab, Balkh and Helmand.

World Health Day Art Competition

World Health Day (WHD) will be celebrated all over the world on 7th April 2000. In order to encourage children to develop their talents through sending drawings/paintings, WHO has announced an art

competition, titled: "Safe blood starts with me, and blood saves life." (The theme of WHD 2000 is "Blood Safety".)

The deadline for receiving entries is 15 March. Prizes and certificates of merit will be granted to the winners.

Water and Sanitation

Social Mobilizers of the Rural Rehabilitation Department (RRD) provided health/hygiene education to 100 families in Bagrami District of Kabul. A piped water supply scheme was completed in the district last week.

Work continues on the UNICEF-supported piped water supply project in Maidan of Wardak province. The project will benefit 4,000 people in the area.

Agriculture

A joint FAO/UNHCR mission returned to Kandahar after surveying 500 returnee farmers in Garmsir District of Helmand Province for wheat seed and fertilizer distribution.

Under poultry backyard programmes, over 1,000 chickens have been vaccinated against the Newcastle disease in Dand District, Kandahar.

64,000 doses of various vaccines have been distributed to Veterinary Field Units (VFUs) in Jalalabad, Helmand and Farah provinces.

Under the Cattle Production Improvement Programme 1,200 kg balanced feed for poultry and 150kg mineral powder for cattle were distributed among selected farmers in Jalalabad last week.

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

Improved Seed Production

FAO and WFP are continuing an effective food-for-seed scheme that has been operational in Afghanistan since 1994. The project involves some 50,000 farmers in various areas of the country. Selected farmers, with technical assistance from FAO and support from NGOs produce seed of highly-yielding varieties of wheat and other cereals and pulses. WFP provides food wheat for quality-declared seed in the ratio of 1.25:1. This ensures that the seed producers have enough food to feed their families and that a large portion of their seed crops will reach other farmers, especially in food-deficit areas.

In 1999, WFP provided 5,000 tonnes of food wheat to selected farmers to enable them to engage in seed production activities and contribute to food security in Afghanistan.

Repatriation

UNHCR and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed an agreement on a Joint Programme for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in Iran. The Joint Programme envisages the return to Afghanistan of 3,000 Afghan refugees per week. UNHCR's assistance in facilitating voluntary repatriation from Iran will improve protection for Afghans in Iran.

Afghan refugees, who did not have proper papers would be given six months to register their presence and either ask to be sent home or submit a request for permission to stay in Iran.

In the past year, 90,000 Afghans have returned home – a majority under forced repatriation.

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Issue No.350

Funding

The government of Turkey has contributed \$20,000 to help cover the costs of the United Nations emergency project for Dara Souf, Samangan Province.

The Ariana Hijacking

Following the recent hijacking of the Ariana Airlines plane in London, ten Afghan hostages who were released from the Ariana aircraft at Moscow were transported by UNHCR through Turkmenistan and were received at the Afghan/Turkmen border (Torghundi) by UNHCR. UNHCR and UNOCHA transported them to Herat before their subsequent relocation to Kabul by local authorities.

In Kandahar, the United Nations was on hand to receive the 73 Afghan hostages who chose to return home from London. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has verified the voluntary nature of their return, and will facilitate their return to their homes.

The Reconstruction of Khowja Ghar

The area of Khowja Ghar in Takhar Province suffered heavy destruction during the fighting in 1999. According to Shelter Now International (SNI), the shelter survey work in 65 villages has been completed by SNI and ACTED in the districts of Khowja Ghar and Hazar Bagh, as has been the purchase of materials for the reconstruction of

500 shelters. Cards are being distributed to the initial beneficiaries based on current findings. Materials for all the shelters will be distributed by the end of February.

The following materials have been purchased and stored for distribution by SNI: 5,000 wooden beams, 2,000 bamboo mats, plastic sheeting, 237 doors, and 10 windows. An additional, 3,000 wooden beams are to be delivered by the end of the week and 163 doors and 390 windows are in Rustaq ready for shipping. They will be shipped as soon as weather permits and trucks are available.

Weather conditions deteriorated this week with additional rain, snow, and freezing temperatures resulting in additional requests for floor mats and cotton mattresses and delays to the reconstruction efforts.

The water supply situation continues to be a problem in Khowja Ghar City. This problem is unrelated to the recent fighting as the region has historically been water poor. In the past wells were dug to a depth of 50 to 60 meters without success. The placement of an inlet upstream along the Kokcha River has also been made difficult with the mining of the area leading up to the river bridge which was eventually blown up in the fighting.

In a meeting with the local Commission and SNI's engineers, the number one community need identified was the water supply problem.

Food Security/Food Aid

Price of Wheat Flour

The price of wheat flour for the last week of January, in major urban areas in Afghanistan, showed little movement over the previous week's prices. When compared to the first week in October, when the prices began increasing, wheat flour prices remained high, however. Prices had increased by 67% in Kandahar, 65% in Ghazni, 56% in Jalalabad, 52% in Kabul, 39% in Mazar, 27% in Herat and 11% in Faizabad. Prices from the 7th - 13th February remained more or less stable over prices from the last week of January and, as compared to the first week in October, had increased by 64% in Kandahar, 58% in Ghazni, 61% in Jalalabad, 46% in Kabul, 39% in Mazar, 33% in Herat (-) 2% in Faizabad.

Surveys

Between September and December 1999, WFP employed 600 female surveyors in Mazar-i-Sharif and 300 female surveyors in Jalalabad to conduct citywide house-to-house surveys. The results of the surveys serve as the basis for selecting WFP bakery beneficiaries. In both cases, authorisation to employ the women was received from local Taliban authorities and the female surveyors were able to move freely throughout the cities to complete their work.

The Kandahar EMOP

The card distribution for the WFP Kandahar Emergency Operation is expected to be completed during the next week. To date, at least 2,871 families in Kandahar and

Lashkargar have received the first tranche of their family ration, 100 kg of wheat and 25 kg of CSB. It is expected that WFP will distribute 250kg of wheat per household, a total of 7,164 MT, to an estimated 200,000 people. Emergency interventions are anticipated in ten districts and Kandahar City in Kandahar province and one district in Zabul province.

Health

In Badakhshan, a joint meeting of WHO, WFP, AFGHANAID and MoPH in Faizabad City discussed training for traditional birth attendants (TBAs). WFP agreed to provide wheat for TBA trainers and trainees in Badakhshan, while WHO will provide TBA kits. MoPH and AFGHANAID would help in identifying TBAs. In addition, the WHO team met with WFP and signed an agreement about the provision of supplementary food for three tuberculosis centres in Badakhshan.

Disease outbreak

A joint WHO/MoPH mission visited Gulan district in Herat Province to follow up on the previously reported outbreak of veno occlusive liver disease there. The mission observed that the supportive treatment and supplementary food for the patients and their relatives has helped in reducing the mortality rate in patients.

Medical supplies

WHO distributed surgical supplies to the Kunduz Regional Hospital, ARCS Clinic, MoPH Polyclinic, and MoPH Regional Hospital of Kunduz. In Faizabad, WHO distributed medical and lab supplies to the

Faizabad TB control Centre and Laboratory. In Ghazni, WHO provided a suction machine and surgical equipment to PHD Ghazni, and anti-TB and ARI drugs to Maquar and Ander TB treatment centres and Rashidan Hospital. In Kandahar, WHO contributed 13,134 meters of pipe in addition to water supply equipment to the Kandahar Water Supply Department for maintenance and extension.

Training

During this month, the NGO MARUF continued its health education and mine awareness programs for more than 100 vulnerable families (including IDPs from Shamali and surrounding villages) in Kunduz province.

MARUF also continued its Health Education program for 600 families in the Russian compound in Kabul. The project is implemented through four health mobiliser teams (couples).

In Kunduz, WHO distributed malaria guidelines to health facilities, while in Farah City, WHO conducted a two-week refresher-training course for 17 vaccinators.

Disability

Given the increasing workload, CDAP and SCA jointly constructed a new building for the CDAP/SCA orthopaedic workshop in Ghazni City. The new building of 24 rooms will enable the workshop to accommodate more orthopaedic equipment so that it can better meet the needs of disabled people coming from the six neighbouring provinces of Ghazni, Wardak, Logar, Paktia, Paktika and Zabul.

An eight-day theoretical training for the technicians of the CDAP/SCA Ghazni orthopaedic workshop was organised by

CDAP/UNOPS/UNDP in the new building in Ghazni City.

The training aimed at upgrading and refreshing the skills of workshop technicians. The training addressed topics such as gait training and normal human locomotion, deviation in above knee prostheses, instruction about above knee prostheses, and casting of PTB (Patella Tendon Bearing) prostheses.

Narcotics

Following UNDCP's in-depth study of opium and other problem drug use in a group of Afghan refugee women in New Akora refugee camp near Peshawar, (Weekly Update 349), an integrated community-based drug treatment, rehabilitation and prevention programme for male and female drug abusers was initiated in this camp in conjunction with ORA International. Another project providing tertiary prevention services through a day-care drop-in centre for Afghan heroin addicts on the streets of Peshawar was launched in conjunction with the Dost Welfare Foundation.

UNDCP has now completed a comparative study of 300 Afghan street heroin addicts in Peshawar and Quetta, which will be published in the next few months.

UNDCP Afghanistan's pilot programme in the districts of Ghorak, Khakriz, and Maiwand in Kandahar province completed preparation and sowing of 30 demonstration plots of onions. In addition, two karezes were rehabilitated in Khakriz district, and 73 people including tribal elders, religious leaders, and farmers attended drug awareness sessions.

In the family health project, 30 women were trained in family healthcare

and livestock production. The training lasted for two weeks. Thirty other women were trained in basic health rules and sanitation.

Mine Action

Under the Adopt a Minefield programme, the Mine Action programme has identified ten very high priority minefields in Kandahar province due for clearance by June 2000. The areas include one sewerage canal, residential areas, irrigation canals, and agricultural land.

MCPA survey teams completed the survey of two agricultural areas and one grazing area in Maiwand and Dand districts, Kandahar province, a total of 184,245 square metres. The clearance of these areas will benefit 5,640 individuals.

Mine Action has also recently cleared two irrigation canals in Zabul Province. This activity will allow the repatriation of 325 refugee families and enable them to cultivate about 500 hectares of their agricultural land.

Assistance Community News

The NGO International Rescue Committee is opening an office in Herat. Although IRC has been operating in other parts of Afghanistan for many years, this is the first time they will be present in western Afghanistan. The NGO hopes to work in rural rehabilitation, especially in returnee areas.

The NGO Medecins du Monde (MDM) is reviving activity in the west. They are operating health clinics in parts of Herat City.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE ad

Issue No.349

8 February 2000

Funding

The Swedish Government has pledged more than ten million dollars for the humanitarian aid programme for Afghanistan for the year 2000. Approximately four million will be used for continued funding of UN programmes, including mine action, (MAPA), the Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme, (CDAP), FAO, UNICEF's Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and UNOCHA's co-ordination and flight operations.

More than eight of the ten million dollars pledged are in support of programmes within the Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan.

The total Swedish humanitarian aid for Afghanistan in 1999 was US\$ 11.9 million.

Of the amount pledged, US\$ 4.3 million will go to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) for 2000. In the year 2001, Sweden will contribute US\$ 4 million for SCA's work.

SCA activities are mainly in health, education, and emergency preparedness. Within education, SCA supports 580 primary schools with 180,000 students, of whom 20 % are girls. Within health, there are 200 clinics in Afghanistan supported by SCA.

New UNSMA Head Arrives

Francesc Vendrell, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General and new Head of

UNSMA, arrived on 3 February in Islamabad. After meetings here, he proceeded to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries on a fact finding visit.

Mission

A mission from the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) is due in Islamabad on 19 February. In its two-week stay in the region, the mission will travel to Peshawar, Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. It will meet with UN, NGO, and ICRC officials and local authorities and review various projects in different regions.

Food Aid/Food Security

In WFP's emergency food distribution in southern Afghanistan, 35 women and 23 men have been appointed to help identify and register the most vulnerable families in Kandahar, Helmand and Zabul Provinces. In Kandahar City, registration has been carried out in districts one through five and is ongoing in district six. Registration outside Kandahar City remains ongoing.

Health

Repatriation of Health Workers

Since July 1999, ten health workers, of whom nine are female, have been repatriated from refugee life in Pakistan to various locations in Afghanistan and to jobs at health clinics supported by Swedish Com-

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mittee for Afghanistan (SCA). Of the ten newly repatriated, seven are medical doctors, while three are advanced mid-level health workers. They now work in Kapisa, Kabul, Laghman, Takhar, Wardak, Logar, and Ghazni Provinces.

The Relocation of Afghan Professionals Project started in July. It aims to get medical professionals back to work in Afghanistan. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides a hardship allowance to these professionals for one year, as well as funding for refresher training. SCA identifies the medical professionals. The project is due to continue for a year. Altogether, some twenty medical professionals are budgeted to be repatriated to Afghanistan.

Disease outbreak

According to the World Health Organisation, the measles outbreak in Darra Souf of Samangan province has affected 1,500 people with 100 deaths. The World Health Organisation and UNICEF have sent medical supplies and medical personnel into the area. The team will treat the acute respiratory infections (ARI) that are complications of the disease, and will provide Vitamin A to enhance immune response and decrease complications and fatalities.

A joint WHO, PEMT (Provincial Immunisation Management Team), and the NGO Ibn Sina visited Jaghori district of Ghazni Province to monitor EPI services and to investigate the measles outbreak. After visits to 28 villages, the team found 167 cases of measles and five deaths. The team provided the people necessary medicine and health education.

MSF and CHA have reported from Ghorian district of Herat and from Zindajan

district respectively fifty-five and nine cases of measles. A measles outbreak in Farah province is still under investigation. WHO also sent medical supplies with the NGO FOCUS, which went to investigate reports of a measles outbreak in remote Darwaz District of Badakhshan province.

Co-ordination in the Health Sector

Monthly Health Co-ordination Committee Meetings, chaired by WHO, were organised in all regions. The participants discussed the health situation in their regions, updating the district health profiles, training of vaccinators and other EPI staff, preparations for the control of the outbreak of winter diseases, and control of the morbidity rate due to acute respiratory infections (ARI).

In addition, WHO organised a meeting with the Ghazni mother-child health (MCH) co-ordination team to select trainers for 50 traditional birth attendants in Gardez and Sayed Karam districts of Paktia province.

Medical supplies

WHO distributed medical supplies to Rashidan MCH clinic, Ander District Hospital and Khawgani BHC clinic in Ghazni province, to Baghlan Jadid MoPH clinic, Farah Provincial Hospital, Herat Regional and Herat District Hospitals and Herat Maternity Ward. In addition, WHO provided malaria drugs to the Kunduz Malaria Centre and TB drugs to Bust Provincial Hospital, Faizabad Hospital and Jurm, Darwaz, Argo, and Khash clinics.

Training

WHO and/or UNICEF conducted training for 20 persons on EPI in Kandahar City, Herat, and Islamabad. WHO also conducted a four-day workshop for cluster representatives and the village development committee for the Basic Development Needs team in Karokh district of Herat province, and a refresher training course for 10 TBAs (Traditional Birth Attendants and VHVs (Village Health Volunteers in Enjil district.

Water/Sanitation

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has completed a water supply project in Kajaki district of Helmand Province, with funding from DANIDA.

The forty-five wells dug will benefit 938 families, while the baths and latrines will benefit 150 families. The community participated in site selection, and provided unskilled labour and some materials. The pumps provided in the project will be maintained by mechanics initially trained by DACAAR but now paid by the community.

Community Fora

Habitat Kandahar continued to support and assess the needs of communities through its established community fora.

Community support activities in health and education in all nine community fora (six for men and three for women) in Kandahar city were ongoing. During the week, 160 patients (90 women, 55 children, and 15 men) were treated and received medicine in the health clinic of the com-

munity forum in districts 3 and 4 supported by WHO, UNICEF, and MoPH.

In the girl's primary schools in women's community forums of districts 2 and 6, the number of students is increasing. So far, there are 100 girls taught by four female teachers in these two schools.

Agriculture

FAO Livestock

This week, 130 farmers have provided 6,414-litres of milk to BALCO, which was sold to consumers after processing in Kandahar City.

The milk-marketing project is part of FAO Afghanistan's Livestock Production Programme. Three milk collection points and a processing centre have been established where fresh milk is brought to the city for distribution. Milk is collected from the farmers every morning, and payments are made weekly based on the quantity of milk supplied. Contributing farmers benefit both from the regular income and from help with inputs and advice. Any milk that remains unsold is processed into butter and yoghurt, which are sold.

In the beginning of the project, about 500 litres of milk per day (3,500 litres per week) was collected. This has now risen to over 6,000 litres per week.

FAO Crops

In addition to all ongoing programmes, this week FAO sent four different types of bean seeds from Ghazni to Jalalabad to conduct research trials.

In addition to testing new varieties of wheat (described in late week's Update),

FAO also tests rice, maize, barley, and legumes.

Legumes hold special importance in food deficit areas where malnutrition is common among the poorest. So far, this project has screened germplasm of beans, chickpeas, and lentils. The four top yielding bean strain tests had yields that were between 41% and 75% higher than local beans. The strains of lentils and chickpeas tested have given yields between 14% and 52% higher than local varieties.

The implications of these results for food security in Afghanistan are obvious.

Narcotics

UNDCP has published "Opium and other problem drug use in a group of Afghan refugee women." This is the second in UNDCP's four part Community Drug Profiles for Afghanistan, which are intended to provide assessments of specific drug problems and at-risk groups within Afghan communities. The profiles are undertaken by UNDCP's Drug Demand Reduction Project.

The data for this report was collected from New Akora Refugee Camp in Peshawar, Pakistan. Among other interesting findings in the report is that the majority of women who use drugs are poly-drug users who rely on a combination of both opium and pharmaceuticals such as tranquillisers.

The report is available from UNDCP Afghanistan.

Mine Action

The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan's December report is now available. The largest mine action programme in the

world, MAPA works with thirteen implementing partners in mine survey, clearance and awareness.

According to the December report, MAPA has exceeded its targets for surveying both mined and battlefield areas in 1999. In mine clearance, it has almost met its annual target for clearing mined areas and has exceeded its target for battlefield clearance.

Mine incidents involving de-mining staff were the lowest since 1991, when the programme was much smaller.

Since its inception, MAPA has cleared over 200,000 square metres of mine contaminated area of Afghanistan. Over 330,000 square metres of high priority area remain.

The major donors in 1999 were the US, the European Community, Sweden and Germany, each of whom pledged more than two million dollars towards the total 1999 budget of USD 25.6 million.

Human Rights

In response to queries concerning the outcome of the investigation into killings in Mazar (1997 and 1998), a letter of the UN Secretary General to the General Assembly (November, 1999) summarises the work of the investigation team and its outcome. The investigation did not result in any new evidence or reach a definitive conclusion in terms of what happened and who was responsible. The investigation concluded that while "killings of civilians had taken place and there had been serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights" it was unable to reach definitive conclusions concerning, for example, which party was responsible for particular events. In its conclusion, the report notes that little information was forthcoming

from the parties to the conflict, that other information was "patchy," and that neither party extended meaningful co-operation. The Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) has no plans to pursue this matter further.

The text of the letter of the Secretary General to the General Assembly will be available on the website of the Afghanistan assistance community: www.pcpafg.org. The document will be in the news section, under "Afghan News," in the sub-category of UN HQ Afghanistan.

Afghanistan at the United Nations

United Nations headquarters in New York reports that Afghanistan has paid its UN dues for the year 2000, amounting to \$110,000.

