

TIL UM : 5.3, 5.6, 5.15.3, 5.1F.4
FRA AMB. I ISLAMABAD
UDEN SKR. DEN 14.7.98

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.271

7 July 1998

Kabul talks

UN and Taliban officials held a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee 30 June – 4 July. Discussion topics included the key issues of access to healthcare and education, and last week's instruction to NGOs to move to the Kabul Polytechnic by the end of the month. Further discussions on health and education are scheduled for this week in technical commissions, made up of UN, NGO, ICRC, and Taliban representatives.

The health commission is charged with finalizing a protocol outlining ways in which healthcare can be delivered, and with sorting out the female healthworkers' ID card issue. In May, women working for NGOs were forbidden to work unless they possessed an ID card. Since the announcement was made, no ID cards have been issued, and delivery of assistance to women, particularly through community activities, has been severely reduced.

The education commission will focus on the need to regularize and approve informal schools and seek to make progress on the establishment of formal schools for girls.

A second round of meetings of the JCC will take place in Kabul from 13 July.

From the frontline

Rocketing of Kabul continues, and further heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire are reported from the frontline area north of Kabul, the Tagab valley, and Jalrez.

Large numbers of Taliban troops have been seen arriving at Herat airport on civilian aircraft.

There have been reports of Taliban military action against Hezb-I-Islami in Ghor.

Heavy fighting continues in north-western areas of Kunduz and the northern part of Baghlan.

Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman.

Law and order

Criminal activity still prevails in Mazar-I-Sharif. On 27 June a person was shot and robbed in front of the WHO office. On 30 June a gunfight reportedly broke out in front of the UNICEF office, with two civilians being killed and two more wounded. On 30 June a UN staff member's house was robbed by an armed intruder.

On 30 June an NGO driver was stopped in Herat and detained for having an international female staff member sitting in the front passenger seat. He was subsequently released.

ORT campaign

This year's ORT, education sanitation, and hygiene campaign will take place between 6 and 12 July. Preparations have included training medical staff, community elders, mullahs, teachers, and media reporters. Radio messages have been prepared, along

with banners and painted messages on the walls of buildings.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP-supported vocational training for men and women remains suspended. Habitat's community-based education programme in Districts 3 and 6 continues. The community has taken responsibility for dealing with any problems that might arise.

The Habitat solid waste clearance project will end on 6 July, when project funding comes to an end.

WHO has embarked on preliminary studies on community-based programmes in consultation with the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Charasyab. The aim is to empower communities at village level by identifying key problems and solving them using locally available resources.

The UNOCHA Mine Action Programme has now cleared the power line between Naghlu and Kabul, enabling the Ministry of Water and Power to repair and extend the line into Kabul city.

UNHCR has approved a revolving fund project for returnees in Azro, enabling 400 families to earn money from small home-based activities. The project will be implemented by AREA.

Central Highlands

Preparations are under way for a Common Programming Workshop for this region, to be held 21-23 July.

A convoy of eight trucks carrying 86 tonnes of wheat is due to arrive from the north this week. WFP hopes to transport at least 2,000 tonnes from the north each month. Food distributions are currently being carried out in Ghorband and Uruzgan.

UNHCR has launched a traditional handicrafts project for 80 women in Lal, Ghor province, to help returnees support themselves.

FAO Crops established an integrated pest management demonstration in Ghor, and continued transplanting and distribution of vegetable seedlings in Yakawlang and Panjao.

Northern Region

Save the Children UK is running training courses in Mazar-I-Sharif to raise awareness of the situation of children and Afghanistan, and their rights. An important focus of the training is planning ways to promote children's involvement in work, community, and home environments.

FAO Crops activities continue in the Northern Region. Harvesting and threshing of wheat trials has been taking place, alongside planting of rice and mung beans.

Western Region

WFP provided food for a widows' wool spinning project and a UNHCR shelter project in Farah.

WHO provided therapeutic treatment to 50 TB patients in Qala-I-Nau provincial hospital.

UNICEF provided supplies for the nutrition ward and female burn unit at Herat regional hospital, and supplied fuel for the EPI cold chain. UNICEF also gave 159 hand pumps to the Rural Rehabilitation Department.

MERLIN is running training courses for male and female healthworkers in Farah, focussing on major morbidity and seasonal diseases related to hot weather.

FAO Livestock investigated an outbreak of an unknown disease in Ghorian district. The organization also distributed 3,500 molasses feed blocks to veterinary field units in seven districts in Herat. A re-

fresher course was held for 15 paravets, and a poultry course started for 15 trainees.

FAO Crops sprayed pomengranate orchards with pesticides. Four sites were selected for experiments using poisoned bait against melon fly.

TIL UM : S.3, S.6, SIS.3, (SIF.4)
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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.269

23 June 1998

From the frontline

On 15 June, two rockets hit Kabul Airport, approximately 300 metres north of the passenger terminal. No damage or casualties were reported. In the frontline area north of the city, further heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have been reported, but there has been no significant change to troop positions. Sporadic exchanges of artillery and rocket fire continue in the Tagab Valley and artillery exchanges also, reportedly, continue on the Jalrez front, north-west of Kabul.

Mazar has been generally quiet during the past week although the heavy military presence remains in the city. Faction troops are now reported to be reconsolidating checkpost positions. The crime rate is reportedly still high. Instances of factional fighting were reported in the city over the weekend 20/21 June and in Kulm the previous weekend.

A series of robberies in the Jalalabad area has prompted a reinforcement of the curfew and an increase to the number of nightly police patrols. Some 15 criminals operating along the Jalalabad/Kabul roads were reportedly arrested by the Taliban during the past week.

Kabul programmes disrupted

On 17 June the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue ordered the closure of all informal schools and suspension of community-based vocational

training programmes for women in Kabul. The aid community has voiced its concern about the move, which it fears will have a devastating impact on its ability to help the most disadvantaged of Kabul's residents.

Earthquake

Eleven helicopters are now transporting supplies from Tajikistan into Afghanistan and taking them on to the earthquake-stricken villages. Distributions are predominantly of food and shelter materials. The initial emergency medical phase over, medical NGOs have departed. Oxfam intends to spend another two months in the region repairing and improving water supplies, and other NGOs will remain to carry out the rehabilitation phase, with some technical input from the UN regarding e.g. agricultural methods and ways to rebuild houses in ways and locations that will help protect people from the impact of future earthquakes.

So far there has been no response to the 12 June appeal for funds for rehabilitation, launched by the Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator.

Building capacity

Building indigenous capacity in Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) for disabled people and their communities in Afghanistan is a key strategic objective of the UNDP-funded Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Programme.

UNDP/UNOCHA office, and circulated in July.

Donor support for the initiative continues to gain momentum. The Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General have both received letters from government representatives expressing enthusiasm for common programming.

Repatriation report

By 11 June, UNHCR had helped 48,581 refugees had return to Afghanistan since the beginning of the year: a 20 per cent increase on the corresponding figure for 1997. The new group repatriation scheme continues to attract groups that would find it difficult to return if they did not get the extra help UNCHR provides to overcome major physical or socio-economic problems.

On 15 June, a convoy carrying 944 Afghan refugees set off from Karachi's Orangi Town suburb for southern Afghanistan. The group, which went via Quetta, was the second to return from Karachi this year.

In all, since March, UNHCR has organized 16 repatriation convoys which have carried home almost 8,000 refugees belonging to eight targeted groups.

Discussions are under way with more than 20 more interested groups.

Immunization days

Agencies are working together throughout the country to compile reports on the vaccination coverage achieved in the May and June National Immunization Day campaigns.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

The UNCHS (Habitat) workshop in Kabul is now producing hand pumps, in close co-

operation with UNOPS. Over the past week, more than 400 precast drainage pipes have been made in cooperation with the Kabul Housing Factory. A meeting was held with community leaders in District 6 to establish a community-based solid waste management programme and composting system.

WHO collected disease reports from the Kabul City Hospital and other health facilities.

WFP released 415 tonnes of food through food-for-work schemes (including the Habitat hand-pump manufacturing programme), hospitals, and UNHCR's repatriation programme in Khost.

UNICEF monitored the safe motherhood/emergency obstetric care project in Logar, and noted the urgent need to find more qualified female health staff. UNICEF is supporting six water and sanitation projects that are being carried out by the Rural Rehabilitation Department in Kabul, Logar, and Wardak. Reports from the village of Chenari indicate that water projects here played a significant part in attracting 70 families back to their homes.

FAO Crops distributed fencing materials and fertilizer to ten fruit tree nurseries in UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative districts in Azro and Tizin.

UNOPS is constructing a primary school for 400 girls and boys through the Reza Khel cluster village development committee in Azro. Another cluster village development committee is working with UNOPS to improve flood protection in the village of Musa Khan. One of the aims here is to prevent floods damaging the local school.

DACAAR has completed two well-improvement projects in Ramak district, Ghazni. These provide 2,000 families with safe drinking water, improving health and encouraging refugees to return. A third

FAO Crops conducted a week-long fruit and vegetable training course in Bamiyan. A total of 50 trainees, including women, benefited from the course. Oxfam, Solidarites, Habitat, CLOs (Community Liaison Officers) and local farmers also participated.

UNOCHA Mine Action Programme and MCPA survey teams are in Bamiyan to survey and assess the mine and unexploded ordinance (UXO) problem here.

FAO Crops distributed seed and mineral fertilizer to facilitate establishment of spring wheat demonstrations on private land, visited a Solidarites fruit tree nursery, as well as vegetable trials, demonstration plots and kitchen gardening activities carried out by FAO Crops and Solidarites field staff in Yakawlang district.

Eastern Region

Under the sanitation project to build 1,000 latrines in Jalalabad, 170 latrines have so far been completed with community participation. Over the past week, 20 families in Zone 4 of Jalalabad City completed latrines. Two female social mobilisers of Jalalabad Municipality, hired by UNICEF, are disseminating hygiene education and sanitation messages via house to house visits. The production of concrete slabs to cover latrine pits is also progressing well.

UNICEF met with the Government of Laghman and Provincial Director of Health. They noted that the lack of blood for transfusion is a major problem in providing emergency obstetric care in the region. At UNICEF's request, the Governor of Laghman Province agreed to launch a social mobilization campaign through the mosques to encourage men to donate blood to save mothers' lives.

The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) met with other organizations in Jalalabad to seek coopera-

tion in eradicating Afghanistan's drug problem.

Three veterinary field units of Nangarhar Province, named Mmandara, Bantikoot and Surkhroad signed contracts with the FAO Livestock programme. The units will be called "Veterinary Practice" instead of VFU.

Western Region

UNICEF, WHO and MoPH is hosting a team of four consultants currently involved in the assessment and evaluation of EPI in the region. The team has been able to visit several clinics, dispensaries and health units in several districts of Herat and Farah Provinces during the week.

UNOCHA helped UNICEF bring 28 tonnes of kerosene and 45 tonnes of diesel into Herat for use in UNICEF supported EPI and agency activities in the region.

WFP monitored a joint UNHCR/WFP shelter project in Khak-I-Safid and Qala-I-Kha districts, Farah.

UNOPS has helped set up a "Silk Production Committee" in Zendaja. The committee aims to conduct research, investigate innovations in silk processing, and identify methods to increase both the quality and quantity of silk produced in Herat.

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Assistance for Afghanistan
WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.268

16 June 1998

From the frontline

Rockets hit Kabul again on 9 and 10 June. Fighting continues to the north of the city with neither side apparently making any significant gains.

Counter-attacks in northern Kunduz have reportedly pushed Northern Alliance forces back to their former positions near the provincial border.

There have been no reports of significant activity on the Badghis front.

Earthquake

The UN has appealed for almost US\$7 million to provide emergency rehabilitation assistance for the 50,000 victims of the 30 May earthquake.

Donors have already pledged or contributed around \$2.5 million, enough to fund initial relief efforts. But a further \$7 million is needed to support rebuilding of houses and public buildings, to repair roads and bridges, upgrade the airstrip at Khwajar Ghar to the west of the affected area, and to carry out work on water supplies. This is all vital work that needs to be done before winter strikes in October.

Agencies say that the emergency medical phase is now over. The focus now is on food, shelter, and water.

The relief operation has been seriously hindered by the shortage of helicopters and bad weather. Protracted negotiation processes and broken agreements have left

aid workers frustrated and disaster victims embittered.

Another two helicopters joined the UN/ICRC fleet Monday, and more are expected later this week. This enables aid agencies to fly in the substantial stocks of supplies that have been building up in northern Afghanistan over the past two weeks, supplementing provisions (notably food) that had been prepositioned in the area. Supplies continue to come in by cargo plane and helicopter from Peshawar and Dushanbe to the landing strips at Raizabad and Khwaja Ghar.

Meanwhile, while striving to build up an adequate helicopter fleet, around 1,000 donkeys are laboriously transporting food and some shelter materials to desperate villagers.

Common programming

The Common Programme Afghan Working Group met for the first time on 15 June. Participants, predominantly from NGOs, discussed roles and objectives for the group, and identified constituencies to be represented at future meetings. The group meets again in two weeks' time.

A common programming workshop will be held in Kandahar on 20-21 June.

A number of UN agencies are currently consolidating field and headquarters reactions to the common programming document. These will be put together with all the other reactions received by the

project, to improve 400 baths and 200 latrines, aims to improve health and hygiene standards by introducing these facilities to 600 families to serve as a model for the wider community.

Central Highlands

Action Contre la Faim is analysing the findings of its nutrition survey in Bamiyan city.

Twenty women have been selected from ten villages to take part in a traditional birth attendants' training course run by the Bamiyan Public Health Department under a pilot scheme initiated by UNHCR.

Western Region

WFP and FAO Crops have been surveying the damage caused by last month's storms and assessing what assistance farmers may need to replace their crops.

UNICEF distributed supplies to health clinics.

WFP distributed 158 tonnes of wheat via food-for-work, food-for-training, and IDP feeding programmes.

UNCHS installed five sets of hand-pumps in different locations in Herat city.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 267

9 June 1998

1998 Appeal underfunded

Halfway through the year, donors have pledged or contributed less than one-fifth of the funds UN agencies and NGOs need if they are to carry out the work they planned to do this year in Afghanistan. The agencies discussed those plans with donors, and appealed for US\$157 million to enable them to do the job. So far, donors have responded with pledges or contributions worth just over US\$30 million.

Although it is understandable that donors are disturbed by the current situation in Afghanistan, there is concern that the victims of the 18-year-old conflict are being further punished – by being deprived of the funds needed to provide vital relief and rehabilitation assistance.

While donors have responded generously to the 30 May earthquake, it is important to remember that there is an urgent need to fund other activities. These include education, healthcare, refugee return, mine action, and rural and urban rehabilitation.

The UN Coordinator for Afghanistan is therefore appealing, on behalf of UN agencies and NGOs working in the country, for donors to come forward with more funds. These funds are essential if the Afghan people are to rebuild their lives, and if the international community is to contribute to establishing a lasting peace in this shattered country.

From the frontline

Several rockets were fired into Kabul last week, some of them landing in residential areas and killing civilian adults and children.

Fighting continues north of Kabul, particularly in the Shakar-Dara area, Tagab valley, and Jalrez. Frontline positions remain unchanged. An armed clash between local commanders is reported to have taken place in Lal, Ghor province, on 28 May.

Heavy fighting is reported from both eastern and western fronts in Kunduz, with the Northern Alliance apparently making significant gains in the Qalai Zal district, northwest Kunduz.

Reports have also come in that Hezb-I-Islami leader Hekmatyar is recruiting a fighting force in Balkh.

A large-scale Northern Alliance offensive on the Badghis front reportedly caused the Taliban to withdraw to positions south of the Morghab river. Large numbers of Taliban prisoners were said to have been taken, along with significant quantities of equipment. Subsequent reports indicate that a Taliban counter-attack may have reestablished the frontline between Bala Morghab and Gormach. The Northern Alliance reportedly bombed Qala-I-Nau on 1 June.

Earthquake

For the past ten days, the UN, ICRC, and NGOs have been working with the local authorities to provide emergency medical and food aid to the victims of the 30 May earthquake.

It is now clear that this is a far worse disaster than the February quake, affecting a far wider area, and causing much more damage. Agencies are still compiling data and exact casualty and injury figures should be available shortly.

The response to this quake has been quicker than it was in February, but it has still been a somewhat frustrating process for all those involved. Bad weather, landslides, hostile terrain, and difficulties in finding helicopters have all hindered relief efforts.

Nevertheless, the most severely injured people have now been evacuated from their villages for treatment in clinics and hospitals. Others have been treated in their home villages.

Aid agencies have delivered food allocations designed to last one week to the 56 worst affected villages – i.e. all those that were more than 50 per cent destroyed.

Major concerns now are the need to provide clean water and basic sanitation facilities, additional shelter materials, larger supplies of food, and preventive healthcare. Aid workers are worried about an increasing tendency for villagers to leave their homes: fear of aftershocks has already driven some 450 people to Rustaq.

Logistical problems persist: the UN and ICRC have a small fleet of 2.5-tonne helicopters, in addition to two large MI26 helicopters hired by OFDA (USA). Both organizations have located additional helicopters, which are hoped to start flying this week, although contractors have failed to respect delivery deadlines.

WFP, on the UN's behalf, has hired an Antonov-32 to transport supplies from Peshawar. NGOs (notably ACTED) have similar planes bringing in goods from Dushanbe.

To overcome the lack of aviation fuel available in northeastern Afghanistan, the UN has set up a fuel "air bridge" between Dushanbe and Faizabad. This enables helicopters to refuel in Afghanistan instead of returning to Tajikistan. A similar air bridge can also be established from Peshawar should this become necessary.

Work is also underway to clear tracks and roads to facilitate access by truck. Meanwhile, agencies are transporting vital food supplies by all means possible, including donkeys.

Offers of assistance (in cash or in kind) have been received from a number of sources including Canada, Denmark, ECHO, France, Germany, the ICC, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, OPEC, Pakistan, the UK, and the US.

An emergency coordination team has been meeting daily at the UNDP/UNOCHA offices in Islamabad since the earthquake occurred. The team, which includes representatives from UN agencies, ICRC, IFRC, NGOs, and ECHO, has decision-making responsibilities for the relief operation, and coordinates the distribution of relief goods with similar teams in Peshawar and Dushanbe, as well as with the field offices in Faizabad and Rustaq.

Food distributed in Hazarajat

Enough wheat to feed 44,000 hungry people for two months crossed frontlines into Hazarajat and the Ghorband Valley this week. The convoys are the second batch to cross the lines. The first group, carrying 600 tonnes of food for Hazarajat and 110 for the Ghorband were successfully brought across two weeks ago.

Children in Conflict

The Save the Children group (Raada Barnen, Save the Children Federation-US, and Save the Children-UK) and UNICEF launches a report on *The Impact of Conflict on Children in Afghanistan* on Wednesday 10 June.

Copies of the report can be obtained from Save the Children UK (fax 051 279 216), SCF-US (fax 051 279 210), Raada Barnen (fax 091 840 349) and UNICEF (fax 091 840 437).

Common programming

Workshops have now been held in Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul on common programming. Broad support has been offered along with many suggestions as to how to make it work.

Areas of primary concern include the role and composition of the seven Regional Coordination Bodies and of the Afghanistan Programming Board and how to improve needs and capacity assessments as well as monitoring and evaluation of assistance activities;. Other issues include the basis to involve Afghans in common programming – those working in the aid sector, local communities and the authorities; and how resources and training opportunities will be available to stakeholders to enable them to play a full part in the proposed mechanism.

There will be further workshops and meetings in the coming weeks, including sessions with Heads of UN agencies and with interested donors.

One objective of these meetings is to encourage and help stake-holders to respond in writing, ideally with practical suggestions, to the 'Making a Reality of Principled Common Programming' document. The deadline for receipt of written comments is 30 June.

For further information please contact Michael Keating or Johan Edler in Islamabad on tel 211 451; fax 211 450; e-mail michael@undpafg.org.pk.

Repatriation report

A group of 80 families returned to their villages in the Mosahi area of Char Asyab on 28 May.

Another 63 families returned to Khak-e-Jabar, Kabul, on 4 –5 June. UNHCR is working to help these returnees settle down in their home villages.

National Immunization Days

The second round of polio immunizations are taking place throughout the country this week, amidst major public awareness campaigns involving religious leaders, street parades, and local radio stations.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

The MoPH, UNICEF, and WHO organized parades to promote EPI activities in Kabul, Pul-E-Alam, and Maidan Shar.

UNICEF continued work on the Chenari piped water supply project and carried out health education through rural health workers. The community has decided to start building sanitary latrines near mosques.

Another 72 children from the orphanage were reunited with their families. They now sleep at home and come to the orphanage during the day. So far 296 of the 490 children in Taha Maskan Orphanage have been reunited with their families.

The UNOCHA Mine Action Programme has doubled the number of mine clearance teams working on the Naghlu-Kabul powerline.

Central Highlands

Staff seconded from a variety of UN agencies have been supporting WFP's food distribution efforts in the area.

In collaboration with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Solidarites Afghanistan-Belgium, and UNESCO, UNOPS is training teacher trainers in Yakawlang, Panjao, and Waras. By the end of the 11-month programme, 10,000 primary teachers should have benefitted from the training.

Eastern Region

DACAAR has improved 100 wells in Kho-gyani, Nangarhar, a project that has benefitted

2,000 families who now have access to clean drinking water, and who have received water-related health education. Similar project is benefitting a total of 4,000 families in Dand-E-Pathan and Chamkani in Paktia. In each case, communities have provided unskilled labour and the local authorities have supported the initiative.

A class of disabled children has graduated from a UNICEF and WFP-supported bicycle training course run by the NGO AABRAR.

Western Region

Five teams are currently in the field assessing damage from last month's hail storms and floods in Herat and Badghis, and working out what rehabilitation efforts might be needed.

FAO Crops reports a serious outbreak of sunn pest in parts of Herat and Badghis. This, coupled with storm damage, could result in substantial crop losses. FAO has transferred 860 litres of pesticide to Kushk and Kushk-I-Kona to control the outbreak, and is training 22 people in mechanical sunn pest control.

WEP provided 73 tonnes of food to support the UNCHS (Habitat) Municipal Infrastructure Neighbourhood Action Programme, which is improving the main drainage system, latrines, and clearing solid waste. WFP also distributed 47 tonnes of food to more than 3,000 people under vulnerable group feeding schemes.

A UNHCR team from Central Asia met with agencies in Herat to discuss contingency plans for population displacement in the region.

MSF emptied 280 latrines in Shaidai IDP camp and began building latrines in schools in the camp. The MSF-run Ghoryan mother and child healthcare clinic treated more than 2,000 people over the past month.

Northern Region

In the Faizabad district, UNOPS is constructing a primary school for 135 girls in Dashet-e-Khemchan, and another primary school for girls and boys in Batash. Also in Faizabad, UNOPS is rehabilitating water supplies that will ensure irrigation of 2,000 hectares in the villages of Kuri and Chata.

Jalalabad airport open

The airport at Jalalabad has now reopened following extensive repairs to the runway.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

30 June 1998

Issue No. 266

From the frontline

Kabul City was subjected to more rocket attacks on the morning of 25 June, when two salvos, approximately 10 minutes apart hit the residential area to the west of the airport while a UN aircraft was on the ground. In the frontline area north of Kabul, further heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have been reported, while heavy fighting to the northeast of Kabul has also been reported.

On the afternoon of 20 June, tensions in Mazar-I-Sharif were further elevated when factional fighting broke out in the vicinity of the central mosque. A second confrontation took place in the southwest of the city on 21 June resulting in a number of casualties. On the night of 22 June, fighting between the troops of two factions in the central area of the city resulted in a fire, which caused considerable damage to a large number of shops. A number of civilian casualties were, reportedly sustained.

Heavy fighting is reportedly taking place in the northwestern and eastern areas of Kunduz Province.

On 21 June, a pedestrian was shot and killed by a passing motorcyclist in crowded area near the Customs House in Jalalabad. Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman Provinces. An armed clash between guerrillas and the Taliban checkpoint at Chawki (Kunar) on 22 June was reported. UN missions to Kunar are suspended.

Kabul talks

UN officials are holding a Joint Consultative Meeting with representatives of the Taliban movement in Kabul this week. The agenda includes discussions about arrangements under which assistance activities take place, and women's and girls' access to health, education, and vocational training.

Earthquake

The Government of Japan has indicated that it is willing to donate US\$350,000 to help support the initial rehabilitation phase in the earthquake-affected area.

Helicopter distributions of food and non-food items to central hubs continue: supplies are then moved on to villages overland.

The UNDAC teams have now left the area. One UNDAC staff member will remain in Dushanbe for a further week.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP has obtained permission from local authorities to dispatch 100 tonnes of food from Kabul to Hazarajat. Another 200 tonnes of wheat will be moved from Bamiyan to Ghorband.

Under the UNHCR planned group repatriation scheme, a group of 141 families returned from refugee camps in Peshawar to their place of origin in Azro on 24 June, 1998.

FAO Crops transferred 6 tonnes of maize seed and mung beans to P.E.A.C.E. Initiative areas in Farah, and analysed maize and mung bean germination tests. A mission was sent to Ghor to establish an integrated pest management programme. Harvesting of flax began in Urdo Khan farm.

FAO Livestock gave a refresher course to 14 DVM and assistant vets from Herat and Farah, and a refresher course for 15 paravets. 15 trainees were given a refresher course in poultry production and provided with 50 chicks each. 15 new trainees were given 800 eggs and two incubators.

UNHCR provided the Monuments Department of the Ministry of Culture with 15 sets of tools for use in a project to collect fragments (faience, inscriptions etc.) at various sites in Herat City and Province.

WFP distributed 16 tonnes of food to a skills development and literacy project for women in IDP camps. Another 9 tonnes were distributed for a home-based skills training project for women in Gozara District.

Habitat completed 600 metres of pipe installation for the Sutan Agha Water Supply project.

At ICRC's request, a canal in Balamurghaab District of Badghis is being cleared. This irrigates the land of eight villages and provides drinking water for more than 34,000 people

In IDP camps in Herat, the emphasis on selecting and training one volunteer per village to be responsible for mine awareness has been increased. Mine Action staff are ensuring proper training as support for the volunteers. The ICRC has been provided with lists of volunteers, which will enable follow up the training once people have returned to their villages.

Southern Region

The staged resumption of Mine Action operations in Kandahar has now been completed. On the ground this has meant the Mine Action support for a range of humanitarian projects, including clearance of high-priority tasks in districts designated for the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative in Farah, is again occurring. The programme is now considering ways in which mine awareness needs can be met in other areas that had been supported by teams that had been re-deployed from Kandahar. In Khost and Saed Karim this need is likely to be met by training additional community teachers.

FAO Crops conducted an apricot drying training course at the FAO Crops sub-office in Kandahar. The programme has also completed 70 per cent of the planting in farmer fields demonstrations in five UNDP P.E.A.C.E. Initiative districts in Kandahar Province.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 266

2 June 1998

From the frontline

Northern Alliance forces have reportedly broken through the long-standing front line in the Gormach area of Badghis Province and have advanced to Bala Morghab.

To the North of Kabul, further heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire and a series of assaults on defensive positions have been reported.

Mazar city has been generally quiet, although the long-promised reduction of the heavy military presence in the city is yet to be effected. Large numbers of families from Bamian have reportedly occupied the former Sakhi refugee camp, north of Mazar city.

Heavy fighting continued on the Bangi and Eshkamesh fronts in Takhar Province. - Tension in the Faizabad region of Badakhshan Province has eased and the surrounding districts are reportedly quiet.

UN returns to Kandahar

UN offices reopen in Kandahar this week, and international staff return to the city following the announcement on 28 May that the UN had decided to lift its programme suspension in the Southern Region. On 28 May UN and Taliban officials met in Kandahar and agreed to actively demonstrate their commitment to the 23-point Memorandum of Understanding signed in Kabul on 13 May. The UN is demonstrating its own commitment to the agreement by restarting programmes such

as mine action, drug control, rural and urban rehabilitation, and refugee return.

Earthquake

The UN is desperately searching for helicopters and fuel to assist in the relief operation it is currently mounting in cooperation with the ICRC and NGOs in northern Afghanistan.

On 30 May an earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter Scale (according to the US Geological Survey) struck northern Afghanistan, some 70km WNW of Faizabad - i.e. approximately the same location as the 4 February quake. More than 70 villages, located in a mountainous area covering 1,750 square kilometres, have been affected. Three districts were struck: Rustaq, Chah-ab, and Shar-I-Buzurg. The last of these seems to have suffered most.

So far, the damage appears to be greater than it was in February. Survey teams have visited 29 villages, 12 of which are considered "category A" - i.e. 80 per cent or more destroyed. Local authorities estimate that 4,700 people have been killed, but it is too early to give accurate casualty or injury figures.

Initial relief efforts are focussing on evacuating injured people to hospitals in Faizabad and Taloqan, and to clinics in the main villages of Rustaq, Chah-ab, and Shar-I-Buzurg. ICRC and medical NGOs such as MSF and Merlin are supporting these medical facilities.

Activities in Shar-I-Buzurg are hampered by the inaccessibility of the mountain villages: roads have been destroyed by landslides, making helicopter the only viable means of transport at present. The UN has one helicopter (on loan from UNMOT) in operation. The ICRC has two. There is an urgent need for more helicopters and fuel to enable aid workers to start to take in the food and shelter materials which the aid community are stockpiling in the region.

Access to villages in Rustaq and Chah-ab is easier as many of these can be reached by road. ACTED and Concern have supplied bread to villages in these districts. These areas are being serviced from an operational base in Rustaq, which will be supplied via Khwajar-Ghar airstrip. The main base has been established in F aizabad.

The UN and ICRC are flying supplies and aid workers in from Pakistan using their own small planes. Plans are under way to acquire cargo planes to enable them to transport the large volume of relief supplies necessary.

Two UNDAC (UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination) teams have arrived. Supported by OCHA and funded by western European countries, staff are now operating in Afghanistan and Islamabad. UN agencies with staff on the ground: WFP, who have provided a senior staff member to lead relief operations in Afghanistan, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDCP, UNOCHA, and the UNDP-funded Habitat and UNOPS programmes.

The UK government, which donated more than US\$3 million to support coordination and logistics after the February earthquake, has now made a further donation of US\$250,000 to the British medical NGO Merlin to support emergency medical

assistance in Badakhshan after this second quake.

Food gets to Central Highlands

The first WFP convoys crossed two frontlines to deliver food to the Ghorband Valley and Hazarajat on 28 May. The deliveries followed the Taliban's announcement that they would allow the UN to transport 800 tonnes of food to Hazarajat provided 200 tonnes were also sent to Ghorband.

UN agencies have seconded staff to WFP to assist in monitoring the ongoing distribution of the initial delivery of 500 tonnes of wheat flour in Hazarajat. WFP estimates that the delivery will feed 30,000 people for a month, and that it represents about one-tenth of the region's immediate food requirements.

A further 110 tonnes of food were delivered to Ghorband, where 25 per cent of the civilian population are estimated to urgently require food.

Opium burnt in Jalalabad

On 1 June the Taliban authorities publicly destroyed 1,893 kilogrammes of fresh opium, fulfilling a pledge previously made to UNDCP.

During the ceremony, which was attended by representatives from a number of UN agencies, the authorities drew attention to the need to reduce poppy production, and to the fact that the Holy Koran forbids the use of drugs. They called for help for farmers switching to other crops, and also deplored the impact of opium on young people in the West and in other Islamic countries.

Common Programme

The timeframe for taking common programming forward will be as follows. Between 1 -19 June, a series of meetings for

all interested stakeholders is being held in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Bamiyan, Peshawar and Islamabad.

The deadline for written reactions to the "Making A Reality of Common Programming" document is 30 June. These will be compiled and circulated to all concerned in early July, and a meeting will be held with stakeholders towards the end of July to discuss an implementation plan starting from 1 August.

It is recognised that implementation of common programming will be phased but that certain proposals can begin immediately. For further information contact Michael Keating or Johan Edler at UNDP in Islamabad (telephone: 051 211 451, fax: 051 211 450, e-mail: michael@undpafg.org.pk

Repatriation from Pakistan

From NWFP:

Two large groups returned spontaneously to Afghanistan from NWFP during the week of 25-29 May. The first group, consisting of 835 refugees (149 families), returned from refugee villages in the Kohat/Hangu region on 27 May. Of these, 82 families were returning to the Gardez region of Paktia province, the other 67 families were returning to Logar. On 28 May, a second group, consisting of 346 refugees (57 families), returned from Dar Samand refugee village to Charasiab in Kabul province.

Because of the large numbers involved, UNHCR agreed to speed up the verification process by sending teams to the refugee villages prior to departure. Returnees received the normal repatriation assistance of Rs. 5,000, two plastic sheets and 300 kg of WFP wheat per family.

From Baluchistan:

UNHCR reports that a number of individuals and families want to go back to southern Afghanistan, now that UN operations in Kandahar are restarting. The two-month suspension has meant that no repatriation assistance could be issued in Kandahar and had ground to an almost total halt. Two more groups of refugees living in Karachi have announced their intention to return to their home areas in southern Afghan provinces, following the successful 18 May group repatriation of 570 refugees from Karachi organised, subsidised and escorted by UNHCR. Around 300 families are tentatively due to leave Karachi on 15 June, with another 200 families lined up for the following week.

Mine Action Programme

Following the recent rocket attacks on Kabul airport, which resulted in hundreds of small explosive devices being scattered over the villages of Dah Yahya and Paimonar, the UNOCHA Mine Action Programme has sent a quick-response mine awareness team to the area to provide essential safety information. Clearance of the devices began immediately.

Mine Action activities are now resuming in a phased manner in southern Afghanistan. Teams that were earlier moved from the region for training (two clearance teams) or other tasks (two manual clearance teams and three mine dog groups) will first complete the tasks they are currently carrying out, and will then return. The teams that remained in the south (nine clearance teams) will be able to resume their work within about three days.

National Immunization Days

UNICEF, WHO, NGOs, and ministries of public health are cooperating throughout

the country to prepare for the second round of immunizations, scheduled to take place this week.

UNEP rewards zookeeper

UNEP has nominated Aga Akbar of the Kabul Zoo for one of its Global 500 awards. The awards are to be made on 5 June to 23 individuals from 19 countries in recognition of their contribution to environmental conservation.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WHO provided 30,000 bednets to Healthnet to help combat malaria and leishmaniasis, and distributed supplies to NGOs and clinics. A WHO technician repaired five x-ray machines in hospitals in Kabul and Wardak.

UNICEF is to provide orientation for 300 imams in social mobilization and community awareness.

UNCHS (Habitat) continues community rehabilitation work throughout the city of Kabul. -

WFP has distributed 1,867 tonnes of food in the region over the past week.

UNOPS is to rehabilitate roads in Char Dehi district, and to provide clean water to villagers in the Kakor Mabain Valley as part of the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative. The Char Dehi roads will enable farmers to get to Kabul more easily, so that they can sell their produce in the markets there.

The Kuwait Joint Relief Committee is providing food to malnourished children and expecting and lactating mothers in central and eastern Afghanistan. Distribution is taking place via a network of NGOs, and has been made possible by a donation from the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah.

Central Highlands

Aid agencies continue to support Bamiyan University by providing funds for flooring and roofing classrooms and student accommodation.

A team including a nutritionist, a food security expert and an agronomist has arrived in Bamiyan. They will start training UN and NGO staff in nutrition assessments and food security for households.

FAO Crops distributed 200kg of improved wheat seed to 20 farmers in Bamiyan and Yakawlang District for further performance testing on farmland. FAO Crops monitored 10 wheat experiments and treated 17 tonnes of wheat in Bamiyan and Yakawlang.

Northern Region

Last week WFP Faizabad distributed 25 tonnes of wheat for infrastructure rehabilitation projects between Ishkashem and Faizabad, implemented by Afghanaid. A further 47 tonnes of wheat was provided under Faizabad Emergency Operation to more than 6,000 beneficiaries.

WFP reports that floods and landslides have seriously damaged the road between Ishkahem and Faizabad.

Focus Humanitarian Assistance has provided 253 tonnes of wheat and 2 tonnes of cooking oil to Sheghnan in Badakshan, 115 tonnes of wheat and 650 kg of oil to Gazkhan in Wakhan District, 46 tonnes of wheat and 325 kg of oil to Rushan sub-district. A total of 80 tonnes of wheat and 2 tonnes of edible oil were provided to IDPs in Pul-i-Khumri. Focus food distributions are being made possible thanks to a donation from CIDA of Can\$1.35 million.

Western Region

WFP distributed 73 tonnes of food for vulnerable group feeding, institutional feeding and food-for-work. The joint WFP/FAP

Crops assessment in the region has been completed.

Habitat Sultan Agha Water Supply Improvement project has excavated 400 cubic meters of excavation and 300 cubic meters backfill. They completed the digging of 5 wells and installed three hand-pumps.

ICRC has completed May distribution to Rawashan and Maslakh IDP camps. These are people who fled fighting in Badghis over a year ago. ICRC has started a rehabilitation project in Morghab, including irrigation, wells and seed provision to enable IDPs to return to their place of origin.

FAO Crops continued sunn pest control and monitored contract seed growers wheat fields. The programme also monitored demonstration vineyards.

Situation vacant

UNDP Afghanistan needs a female national programme officer, with five years' proven professional experience in a development-related field. To apply, or for more information, contact the Personnel Office, UNDP Afghanistan, House 292, Street 55, F-10/4, Islamabad. Closing date for applications: 30 June.

Appeal to Heads of Agencies

UNDP/UNOCHA urgently need e-mail addresses for heads of UN offices working in Afghanistan. Please send these to ariana@undpafg.org.pk.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.265

26 May 1998

Pledges and contributions

The US Government has announced a donation of US\$150,000 to UNICEF to support an education project in Badakhshan. The project was outlined in UNOCHA's December 1997 interim appeal for Afghanistan.

From the frontline

Following the collapse of the *ulema* negotiation process last week, fierce fighting has continued in Baghlan, Kunduz, and Takhar. The conflict north of Kabul has intensified, with rockets being fired at Kabul airport on 21 and 22 May, but causing little damage. The security situation in Mazar-i-Sharif remains precarious.

Food convoys

A convoy left Kabul on 25 May carrying 500 tonnes of wheat, destined for southern Hazarajat. A second convoy left Bamian the same day with 110 tonnes of wheat for Ghorband.

Earlier this month, the Taliban gave WFP permission to take 800 tonnes of food to Hazarajat on condition the programme also supplied 200 tonnes to Ghorband, a Taliban enclave in the conflict zone northwest of Kabul in Parwan province. Ghorband can only be reached by crossing active frontlines and a mine-infested area of no-man's land that separates the Taliban from Hezb-I-Wahdat forces. WFP has now in-

vestigated food needs and cleared access routes to the Ghorband area.

The deliveries will help alleviate food shortages, but they by no means solve the problem completely. WFP's preliminary assessment of the food situation in the Central Highlands region confirms earlier reports that some 167,000 inhabitants are running out of food. The organization concludes that 7,500 tonnes of food are urgently needed to sustain the population over the next three months.

WFP estimates that the 800 tonnes promised safe passage by the Taliban, plus an additional 1,700 tonnes purchased within the Hazarajat region, will keep people going for less than a month. The organization is therefore pressing the opposition Northern Alliance to make safe the routes leading north towards Uzbekistan, where it has stocks of food it cannot currently deliver because the roads are insecure.

Storms in Herat and Badghis

On 19 May a freak storm caused flooding and hail damage across a band approximately 15 kilometres wide, stretching from the Iranian border through northern Herat and central Badghis, as far east as the district of Qadis.

The situation is not immediately life threatening, but aid agencies are concerned about the damage caused by fist-sized hailstones and flash floods to food and water supplies.

all-weather route into Hazarajat from the north.

UNOCHA has provided Oxfam with funds to purchase seeds for replanting 1,000 jeribs of land in Panjao that was damaged by last month's floods.

UNOPS is constructing two P.E.A.C.E. initiative premises in Yakawlang. These will later be converted into community centres.

Eastern Region

While UNHCR's group repatriation scheme gathers momentum, individual families are also returning: 442 families have recently received assistance packages from encashment centres in Jalalabad and Khost.

WHO has launched a six-month home-based health education programme in Jalalabad as part of its citywide sanitation project. Each day, 70 families receive instruction about personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, and the relationship between food, water, sanitation, and health.

WHO has also organized three training courses on the prevention, diagnosis, and management of tuberculosis, a major health hazard in Afghanistan.

UNICEF led celebrations of World Water Day on 13 May, pointing out the links between clean water and healthy children, and highlighting the importance of groundwater resources. UNICEF is involved in numerous water supply projects in the eastern region.

FAO Crops ran a beekeeping training course for 30 people. The organization also arranged for six Afghans to be trained in seed testing and seed-crop field inspection procedures in Pakistan.

Northern Region

In Badakhshan, WFP has distributed wheat to participants in a RAFA-run training project, and provided food for orphans benefit-

ting from an NAC institutional feeding programme.

At the request of two village cluster development committees in Faizabad district, UNOPS is constructing a wash crossing to prevent further erosion of a 5-kilometre road between the two village clusters.

Western Region

The NGO AREA has inaugurated a new technical training centre in Herat. Funded by NOVIB, the centre will train 120 people over the next six months in carpentry, masonry, and metalwork.

WFP distributed wheat for health-related food-for-work activities in three IDP camps and one clinic in the city of Herat. WFP is providing food to Merlin to support a supplementary feeding centre for 150 malnourished children in Farah. Merlin operates 14 basic health centres in Badghis and Farah.

FAO Livestock provided veterinary field units with vaccines against anthrax, black quarter, and new cattle diseases, along with practical handbooks. FAO Crops trained 28 people in sunnpest control and provided pesticides. Food trials and seed multiplication activities continue.

WHO began to evaluate basic development needs in Gozarah and Enjil, and distributed supplies to clinics and hospitals. UNICEF distributed drugs, fuel, and teaching materials.

Kabul Museum

A representative from the UN Regional Coordinator's Office in Kabul met with the director of the Kabul Museum to discuss plans to move the museum collection back from the Kabul Hotel to the original Darulaman building. UNDP/UNOCHA has been assessing the condition of the museum storerooms in preparation for the move.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 264

19 May 1998

UN/Taliban MoU

On 13 May, after ten days of talks, the UN and Taliban finally signed a 23-point memorandum of understanding. This is the first time the two parties have signed an agreement, and the UN hopes that this will be the first step in an ongoing process to enable the organization to enhance delivery of assistance to needy people in Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan.

The agreement lists a number of significant points regarding the "privileges, immunities, and obligations of UN staff" and refers to actions to be taken in the near future to increase girls' and women's access to education and healthcare.

The issue of the "mahram" edict, however, under which all Muslim women are obliged to travel with a close male blood relative, is to be addressed by Islamic scholars.

The issue of access to besieged areas is being followed up outside this negotiation process. The Taliban have said that they are prepared to allow WFP to transport 800 tonnes to Bamiyan and 200 to Ghorband, but the UN is still awaiting all the required clearances.

From the frontline

Heavy fighting continues on the Bangi and Eshkamesh fronts in Takhar Province. Recent reports indicate that Masood's troops have the Taliban incursions under control.

Tension persists in the Faizabad region of Badakhshan Province amid reports of growing pro-Taliban sentiment.

Heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have been reported north of Kabul, but there is no evidence that positions have changed. On the northeastern (Tagab Valley) front, sporadic exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have been reported, along with consolidation of position by both sides. Artillery exchanges have continued on the Jalrez front. No change to the Badghis frontline has been reported, although increasingly frequent unconfirmed reports of troop reinforcement in the area are being received.

Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman Province.

Refugees leave Karachi

The first-ever organized group repatriation of Afghan refugees from Karachi began early on 18 May, when a 20-truck convoy carrying 570 refugees left the city and headed back to villages in Helmand, Farah and Nimroz provinces. The refugees had originally been housed in refugee villages in the Chagai region of southern Baluchistan. They migrated to Karachi several years ago, and settled in the poor suburb of Orangi Town, where most were working as low-paid daily labourers.

After several meetings with the refugee elders, UNHCR agreed to pay a special travel grant to cover the cost of transport. The returnees will also receive plastic sheeting from UNHCR and wheat-

flour from WFP, as well as "Peace Packs" donated by Japanese girl scouts.

This is the third substantial refugee group to have returned in May. On 15 May, almost 300 refugees returned to Tezin, one of two eastern areas targeted by a joint UNHCR/UNDP refugee return programme funded by Japan.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP distributed 851 tonnes of food to different programmes over the past week. WFP and FAO continue to assess the food and crop situation in the seven provinces administered by WFP Kabul.

UNCHS has continued to carry out community-based rehabilitation activities with support of UNDP, ECHO, SAFE and WFP Food-for-Work. Now that the weather is getting warmer, solid waste is being collected twice a day. This week almost 4,700 cubic metres of solid waste has been collected and disposed of.

Manual clearance and dog teams have now arrived in Kabul and Logar for the summer season and minefield clearance is well under way. OMAR has completed a mine awareness course for 16 IFRC and 36 ICRC national staff, and another course for UNCHS workers is in progress. UNCHS estimate that 1,000 people will be involved in this course. There were two mine and three UXO accidents in the city last week. Seven people were involved. Three of them died.

A malaria and leishmaniasis coordination committee was established to support the malaria institute and the parasitology department. Medicine, supplies and medical books were provided to a range of clinics and hospitals.

As part of the Joint UN Programme for Refugee Return Areas, UNOPS is im-

plementing activities with Japanese funding in Azra and Sarobi Districts. The Zargani flood protection scheme at Babar in Azro will stabilize the water flow, thereby ensuring the safety of 900 villagers and protecting their lands and households. In Sarobi, UNOPS is undertaking the physical rehabilitation of the Sarobi hospital, where, despite extensive destruction and damage to the building, male and female doctors have been treating 300 patients every day. The rehabilitation of the hospital will enable improved access to and better provision of healthcare for over 15,000 beneficiaries.

Central Highlands

Donkeys transported 500 quilts and 90 women's sweaters from Yakawlang to Panjao. UN agencies and Oxfam distributed them to people in the valleys most affected by the floods. Estimates of crop and animal losses suggest that there could be a serious food deficit to the area in the autumn.

WFP continues distribution of wheat and potatoes to the most vulnerable families. The Kaji Kak pass has been opened to vehicular transport following the work of WFP in collaboration with the Hezb-i-Wahdat authorities. The snow has been cleared, although now there is urgent need to repair some bridges.

UNHCR, in collaboration with WHO and the Ministry of Public Health, is proposing a training course for 20 traditional birth attendants from 10 villages near Bamiyan town. UNHCR will provide the funds, technical advice will come from WHO, and the implementing partner will be the MoPH. After the training period, each TBA will be given a birth kit to continue her work in the community.

In Yakawlang District, Bamiyan Province, out of 12 Village Development

Communities formed in April, seven are composed of women. These female community organizations have been formed in an attempt to fully involve women in the definition and prioritization of development activities.

Representatives of the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF, WHO and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan last week participated in a coordination meeting on Primary Health Care (PHC) in Logar Province. The meeting discussed the establishment of a joint supervision system, drug supply to the PHC in Logar, recruitment of a female gynecologist and a midwife for each health clinic and repair of a MCH clinic in the capital of Logar Province.

The UNICEF Psychosocial Team conducted a one-day follow-up training on trauma/grief on 4 May for female teachers of a local NGO. At the end of the training the participants were provided with materials on trauma/grief intervention methods. In a meeting on 3 May, Children in Crisis, UNICEF and other partners discussed the reunification of children living in the Tahia Maskan Orphanage with their families. The children will stay with their families at night and come to the orphanage during the day.

Eastern Region

The first round of NIDs successfully took place in the eastern region. According to figures received, out of a total number of 374,240 targeted children, 92.35 percent received polio drops. A doctor from the International Federation of Red Cross, who had volunteered to act as an OPV supervisor, was killed along with the driver of a vehicle in a traffic accident. One vaccinator was badly injured.

With the technical and financial support of UNICEF, three wells were dug

in Surkhrod District. The wells will be furnished with handpumps, and will provide safe drinking water to about 1200 people.

FAO Crops is delivering and distributing motorbikes, sprayers and safe agro-chemicals to district trainers conducting integrated pest protection demonstrations in Ghazni, Paktia, and Paktika Provinces.

DACAAR has provided safe and secure drinking water to improve health of the villagers, and to increase the return of refugees in Khaiwa and Rodat Districts of Nangarhar Province.

Northern Region

All-female development committees are now being established in consultation with UNOPS in Faizabad District. This is the first time such committees have been formed in Badakhshan, and the selection of women took place in full consultation with the local authorities. UNOPS is now operating in Keshem District, and is also focusing on programmes for women here. One of these is a silk production project. The two organizations procured 300 boxes of silk worm eggs from China and sold and distributed these to 300 women in five villages. Follow-up phase activities in organizational support, processing and household income promotion are planned.

Other ongoing activities focus on setting up and running fruit nurseries and the establishment of a new community centre in Dashet-e-Khemchan. This will serve as a meeting place, facilitate the implementation of various educational and literacy activities, and serve as a health care centre.

Last week, WFP Faizabad distributed 11 tonnes of wheat for infrastructure rehabilitation projects in Zebak district, that are being implemented in conjunction

with Afghanistan. Zebak is one of the hungriest and most remote districts of Badakhshan. The FAO Crops and WFP survey is going on in Archi and Emamsahib Districts of Kunduz Province, Kalafghan and Baharak Districts of Takhar Province, and Yaftal and Jurm Districts of Badakhshan Province.

Southern Region

FAO Crops surveyed fruit growing areas, and selected community trainers and demonstration orchards in Ghazni, Paktia and Paktika Provinces.

Western Region

UNICEF assisted the further development of an education project at an IDP camp. The project provides training and technical assistance to men and women.

FAO Crops monitored contract seed growers' wheat fields.



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WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 262

5 May 1998

Pledges and contributions

The US Government has made an unearmarked donation of US\$500,000 to support UNOCHA-coordinated humanitarian assistance activities in Afghanistan.

From the frontline

Fighting continues north of Kabul. Sporadic bursts of heavy machine gun and aircraft weapon fire took place from within the city during the past week.

Fighting also continues in Kunduz and Baghlan. There are so far unconfirmed reports that fighting has broken out around Takhar.

Law and order

A number of new checkpoints have reportedly been established in the area of Mahipar on the Kabul-Jalalabad road.

The spate of armed robberies continues in Herat, with two NGO offices being raided in the past week.

In Mazar, the Police Commander has helped recover some items of UN equipment, including vehicles.

A locally recruited UN female staff member has reportedly received violent threats from a local mullah in Faizabad.

UN/Taliban negotiations

A high-level UN mission arrived in Kabul on 4 May, with a mandate from the Secretary General to discuss the safety and security of UN personnel in Afghanistan. Also on the agenda: the effect of the recent edict restricting foreign Muslim women's travel and its impact on the UN's ability to deliver assistance in Taliban-controlled areas. The

meetings will also address the issues of females' access to health and education, and access to populations in blockaded areas. Initial meetings are reported to have been cordial, with both sides accepting the need to agree on a relationship that will allow the UN to deliver assistance to the people who require it.

Islamabad peace talks

Last week's talks between the Taliban and representatives of the Northern Alliance, held under the auspices of the UN and OIC, agreed to form a 40-member commission of *ulema*. Both sides agreed not to veto each other's choice of delegates. The commission will provide a forum for discussion on certain key issues.

The Islamabad discussions broke up after a weekend break, when the Alliance objected to a change in the composition of the Taliban team.

Northern schools open

Reports from Mazar indicate that schools and higher education institutions are resuming activities for boys and girls at the start of the new academic year.

National immunization days

UNICEF and WHO have been working with NGOs and the MoPH throughout the country on the first round of immunization days, which took place 3-5 May. Orientation and advocacy workshops were organized for district administrators, mullahs, imams, community leaders, and teachers. Local radio networks and newspapers have carried daily features and messages on the

value of immunization. Mass rallies with banners, placards, and broadcast messages have been held in urban centres. A special programme has been broadcast to encourage husbands to ensure that women of childbearing age are vaccinated against tetanus, to protect newborn babies.

Food shortages in Hazarajat

Early reports suggest major food shortages in parts of the Hazarajat. Assessment teams led by WFP in collaboration with UNHCR and WHO, local authorities, and the Wahdat Women's Committee are currently in Lal, Uruzgan, Ghazni, Behsud 1 and Behsud 2, investigating the extent of the problem.

Distribution of locally purchased potatoes and wheat to the worst affected families has begun. So far, WFP has distributed 202 tonnes of potatoes to just under 10,000 people living in the Koh I Biron region. Because the pass to this area is still closed by snow, villagers are walking about six hours over the mountains to the distribution point in Shaidan village. Another 70 tonnes of potatoes have been sent to Lal to feed more than 3,000 people.

Meanwhile, WFP has been working with local communities and authorities to clear snowbound passes to help food get through.

The weather is also hampering other activities: WHO staff had to walk 75 kilometres over the Haji Kak pass from Bamiyan to meet a truckload of supplies for the National Immunization Days, which had come in from Kabul via Ghazni.

Reports on the extent of damage to houses caused by the recent floods in Yakawlang, Waras, Panjao, and Lal will be verified this week.

Floods in the east

UN agencies met with NGOs, ICRC, IFRC, and ARCS to discuss reports of flood damage in Kunar and Laghman. IFRC and ARCS visited the Pech valley in Kunar, and distributed ORS and IV fluids provided by UNICEF. The mission returned on 2 May reporting that damage was not serious and there was no need for an emergency response. Meanwhile NGOs operating in Mehtherlam, Laghman, have also reported that damage is not extreme.

Nevertheless, it appears that periodic floods have, over the past years, progressively washed away a number of foot bridges and flood protection walls in Kunar and Laghman, and, in some places, this has reduced access to health facilities and local markets.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

UNCHS/Habitat has obtained formal permission from the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice to provide education for girls in community centres in Districts 3 and 6. Some 120 girls are already receiving primary education in the community centre in District 3.

UNHCR and WFP are launching a food-for-work project to help 200 returnees rebuild houses in Azro.

On 4 May, 51 families left refugee camps in Pakistan to return to Azro.

WHO delivered vaccines and equipment to Bamiyan through Ghazni and also to Kunduz and Badakhshan. The authorities on both sides have been cooperating to enable delivery of supplies through the frontlines.

WHO also provided supplies and technical information to the malaria and

leishmaniasis department in Kabul, highlighting the importance of early diagnosis, selective and sustainable preventive measures, and showing how to detect epidemics early on and prevent them spreading.

UNICEF constructed three bore wells in Districts 2 and 8 of the city, and Bagrami district of Kabul province. Two handpumps have been installed in Districts 8 and 11, providing safe drinking water for 600 people.

WFP distributed more than 2,000 tonnes of food through different projects.

Central Highlands

UNOPS and SCF (US) are working together in Yakawlang and Panjao in Bamian province to carry out a participatory rural appraisal of women's health, with a focus on reproductive health problems.

Following an urgent request from villagers in Yakawlang district, to investigate a crack in the naturally created wall of the Band-I-Amir lakes, UNOPS sent a mission to provide technical advice, particularly to watermill owners. The UNOPS Yakawlang office will ensure follow-up and help villagers rehabilitate the wall if this proves necessary.

Eastern Region

A UNICEF mission visited Paktika to finalize selection of locations for water and environmental sanitation activities using the area-based approach. Water and sanitation activities will also be carried out in Paktia. These are designed to serve as an entry point via which community activities will be developed. These will, in turn, focus on healthcare, education, and the specific needs of children affected by armed conflict.

WHO and WFP are working on the Jalalabad City Sanitation Project, which aims to prevent sanitation-related diseases.

Ongoing activities include eliminating sites where water collects, graveling roads, and cleaning drainage ditches.

FAO Crops is discussing the possibility of launching a seed production and multiplication programme with UNHCR and WFP.

Northern Region

UNOPS is constructing an office in Keshem, Badakhshan, to facilitate implementation of community-based projects. Work will soon begin on rehabilitation of an irrigation canal aqueduct and an irrigation canal intake.

UNOPS is also working on a water supply project, which will provide safe drinking water to more than 1,000 people in the Faizabad district.

FAO Crops and UNOPS are cooperating to set up and provide training in running fruit tree nurseries through the cluster village development committee in Isari. Thirty farmers are being trained to train others in nursery raising techniques and marketing.

FAO Crops monitored seed demonstration and contract seed growers' wheat fields in Mazar province.

Western Region

UNOPS is reactivating its programme in Herat, focussing exclusively on activities that involve women. In this context, the programme is cooperating with FAO Crops on a silk production project in six districts. Silk worm eggs have now been distributed to rural women, and activities to help women organize the production, processing, and marketing of silk are now planned.

WHO ran a six-day course on clinical management of TB for 49 people at Herat Regional Hospital.

FAO began an anthrax vaccination campaign and provided 345,000 doses of vaccine to veterinary field units.

UNICEF distributed drugs to ARCS and fuel for the cold chain.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Issue No. 261

From the frontline

Kabul city was reported to be quiet, although intruders broke into the UNCHS office during the past week. Sporadic bursts of heavy machine gun and anti aircraft weapon fire from positions within the city continue. To the North and Northeast of Kabul, heavy exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have also been reported. The Tagab Valley road is now understood to be closed to routine traffic due to fighting in the region.

Mazar city remains jointly controlled by six factions. As of 23 April, no move to effect the one month old agreement to demilitarise the city had been reported. Defensive positions within the city, reportedly, remain intact and manned. In the meantime, fighting in Kunduz and Baghlan continues. Reports of looting along the road between Kunduz and Pul I Khumri have also been received. The city of Faizabad, in Badakhshan Province is quiet and tensions have reduced in the wake of factional conflict during the previous week. Roads from Hairaton to Mazar and Mazar to Pul-I-Khumri are reportedly closed sporadically due to military operations, while the border bridge to Uzbekistan is still closed to all traffic.

Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman.

Common programming

A common programming document has now been distributed to stakeholders in the region. It proposes a mechanism for ensuring that the collective impact of assistance activities can be improved in a timely, prin-

ciplined, and cost-effective manner. It recommends a new management structure in which donors, UN agencies, the NGO community and Afghans will all have specific responsibilities.

There will be a series of meetings in early June to discuss the proposals, both with individual stakeholder groups and collectively. The Afghanistan Support Group of donors will discuss the document at its meeting in London on 5 May.

Help for women and children

CDAP (the Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Programme) continues its efforts to help women in a bid to encourage and promote self-sufficiency and development in Afghan family life. Focusing on mothers and widows is an important way to empower families deprived of many basic needs. CDAP has therefore incorporated Vulnerable Women and Children (VWC) as an integral part of its programme.

The VWC section of CDAP launched its developmental activities with the inception of two income-generation projects for the highly vulnerable women, who look after their children and/or disabled husbands and are the only breadwinners of their families.

The two newly established projects, one in Badakhshan and the second in Farah, will work on a pilot basis. The projects will be implemented with the partnership of local NGOs, RAFA and SWRCA respectively. Both projects aim to focus on children as direct beneficiaries through the mother-support approach. About 126 women will be provided with skills-learning

and income-generation opportunities in these pilot projects. Project beneficiaries were selected through local women's shuras, directly by the communities themselves.

Central highlands flooded

Heavy rainfall on 24 and 25 April is reported to have resulted in exceptionally heavy floods in Panjao, and Yakawlang Lal and Waras. Details have not yet been received from Yakawlang Lal and Waras, but reports from Panjao indicate that these are the worst floods for 25 years.

Oxfam is assessing the situation. As well as destruction to houses, several hundred jiribs of autumn wheat have been totally covered by mud and stones, and more than 500 sheep have been killed. The floods threaten to exacerbate existing problems faced by communities that have passed an unusually hard winter, with lower than average food supplies.

Hazarajat food shortages

A WFP mission to the area reports that the 6,000 tonnes of food the programme managed to provide at the beginning of the winter helped the most vulnerable people in Bamiyan and Ghor to get through the worst of the winter. But reports from NGOs and local communities indicate that some people have died, and that food stocks are now exhausted. WFP is launching an emergency effort to assist up to 35,000 people, by providing 500 tonnes of potatoes and 100 tonnes of wheat. The food will be taken to Behsud in Wardak, and then moved on by donkey over mountain passes to the remote villages where the situation is worst.

WFP is also concerned about populations in Haghori and Malistan districts, Ghazni, Sharistan in Uruzgan, and Lal district in Ghor.

Nimroz floods

FAO has just completed an emergency mission to assess reports of an epidemic of livestock disease in Nimroz. Reports indicate that although a few individual farmers have suffered severely (one lost 160 from a flock of 200), the problem is not as widespread as originally feared. The team took 8,000 doses of vaccine, of which 600 have been used so far. The remaining 7,400 have been left to inoculate other animals to prevent further outbreaks.

The main problems appear to be lack of fodder, mange, internal parasites, and PPR - pestes des petits ruminants, a rinderpest-like disease that affects sheep and goats.

IFRC has shortlisted 247 families as immediate beneficiaries of available emergency support. Each family will receive 15 days' ration of food (which is 50-kg wheat flour, 20kg rice, 10kg beans and 1kg ghee). Meanwhile, tents will be distributed to 89 worst affected needy families. While the UN has been ready to provide emergency relief assistance, ICRC and IFRC have taken care of immediate needs. The flood situation is subsiding but there is a growing fear that more floods may occur during the next few weeks as a result of rain falling in the mountains.

Earthquake relief

In continuation of Relief Operations in Afghanistan the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah donated US\$20,000 to provide relief goods for earthquake affected families in Northern Afghanistan. KJRC was entrusted with the task of procurement and distribution of various relief and airlifted nine tonnes of tents, tarpaulins, rice, sugar, and ghee to villagers in Dusst Bazurg in Badakhshan Province.

Merlin submitted a report on the measles emergency vaccination campaign in

Rustaq. The report showed that 20,320 children were vaccinated in the period between 16 February and 7 March 1998. The campaign was carried out in extremely inhospitable terrain and under difficult conditions.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP distributed 1072.5 tonnes of food to food-for-seed (365 tonnes), subsidized bread sales (695), institutional feeding (48.5).

WHO Kabul ran a one-day workshop for provincial EPI managers in the central region on implementation strategies for the upcoming polio eradication campaign. Permission has been obtained to deliver vaccines and equipment to Bamiyan.

WHO, MoPH, UNICEF and NGOs convened a preparatory meeting on guidelines for polio eradication. WHO furnished technical information about objectives and strategies of the national immunization days (NIDs) against polio. WHO continued technical and managerial support to improve the malaria and parasitic institute of Kabul, undertaking an assessment and strengthening existing structure through in-service training and supplies. Mental health has been identified as major health problem in Kabul. WHO in collaboration with MoPH started to gather information on underlying causes and types of problems. Drugs for mental health problem have been provided to mental health hospital.

Minefield clearance was resumed by two OMAR teams arriving from Kandahar. Mine Awareness for 200 workers of Habitat recycling project in Afshar-e-silo was completed by OMAR. Training of ICRC na-eggs to six districts in Herat Province, benefitting 3,306 families.

FAO Livestock has conducted another refresher course for 14 local poultry

tional staff is ongoing. One woman was injured in a mine accident.

UNICEF construction of bore wells has been completed in Districts 2 and 12. Installation two other handpumps will provide safe drinking water for 450 persons. Dissemination of information on sanitation and hygiene is ongoing. A two-day training on war trauma and grief was held by UNICEF and MoPH for 17 female NGO staff members at Malalai Hospital. Another 80 orphans were reunited with their families in the last 10 days, totaling 200 to date.

FAO Crops monitored fields and nurseries in Sarobi and Tizin.

Northern Region

During the last week WFP Faizabad distributed 1.575 tonnes of wheat through WHO for tuberculosis out-patients. At present 630 TB patients are under treatment in Faizabad and Baharaak. This supplementary feeding improves nutritional status and, consequently, recovery chances. WFP Faizabad received 130 tonnes of wheat at Ishkashem from Osh for its operations in Badkshshan.

FAO Crops planted different imported fruit rootstocks in Bamiyan, Baghlan, Jawzjan and Samanagan.

Southern Region

FAO Crops provided different imported fruit rootstocks and locally grown fruit tree saplings to DACCAR's nucleus fruit tree nursery for propagation in Ghazni Province.

Western Region

UNOPS and FAO Crops have completed distribution of 3,496 boxes of silkworm

farmers. At the end of the course 635 chicks were distributed to participants. In an effort to boost livestock disease prevention, 96,000 doses of anthrax vaccine have

been distributed to the Gulran veterinary field unit.

WHO disbursed AFS.53000 Million (equivalent US\$10,000) in interest-free loans to 41 beneficiaries in Guzar and Enjle Districts of Herat. This is part of the income generation project of the basic development needs programme currently being undertaken by WHO. The programme will initially be carried out in five districts of Herat Province. WHO and other agencies have now finalized their plan of action for

the national immunization days against polio.

FAO Crops monitored and applied sulphur to 30 vineyard demonstration orchards for Powdery Mildew of Grape control. FAO Crops also trained total 1,000 farmers on powdery mildew control, seed treatment, ULV machine and pest management.

UNCHS has completed the construction of one large garbage bin in District 1 of Herat town. Municipality workers have removed 192 cubic metres of rubbish.

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NATIONS

Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 260

21 April 1998

Pledges and contributions

The UK government has pledged US\$12.5 million against the 1998 Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan. Of this, US\$7.33 million will help finance the UNOCHA Mine Action Programme, UNDP/UNOCHA co-ordination activities and support for common services, and the FAO Livestock programme. A further US\$3.33 million will go to ICRC and US\$1.83 to NGOs to support education, health, water and sanitation projects.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency has donated just over US\$5 million dollars. More than US\$2 million of this will go to the UNOCHA Mine Action Programme, with the rest supporting UNOCHA coordination, UNICEF immunization programmes, the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative, and FAO.

The total pledged and contributed to this year's appeal for US\$157 million now stands at over US\$25 million

Ambassador Richardson visits

Bill Richardson, US Ambassador to the UN and Special Envoy of President Clinton visited Kabul and Shiberghan on 17 April. Richardson met with members of the Taliban movement and the Northern Alliance, and returned to Islamabad with assurances from both sides that no new military offensives would be launched until they meet in face to face talks, under the auspices of the UN and OIC in Islamabad by 27 April. They agreed to exchange prisoners and to discuss the provision of humanitarian aid, to enable relief workers to work in a safe and

secure environment and in accordance with international accepted standards. They also agreed not to permit terrorism from Afghan soil, to combat drug trafficking, and to improve treatment and conditions for Afghan women.

UN/Taliban meeting

Efforts continue to reach agreement on talks between UN representatives and members of the Taliban movement regarding the conditions under which the UN operates in Taliban-controlled parts of the country. The Taliban have objected to the composition of the UN team: efforts are under way to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

From the frontline

Intense exchanges of rocket and artillery fires have been reported from the north and northeast of Kabul, particularly the Tagab valley. Movements of troops and material from the city towards the frontline have been reported, but there has been no significant change to frontline positions. Regular movement of combat aircraft has been observed at Kabul airport, along with bombing of targets in the lower Panjshir Valley and Jabul Seraj.

There has been no change in Mazar, which is still controlled by six factions, and where no move has been taken to demilitarize the city. Fighting continues in Kunduz and Baghlan.

Fighting between two commanders was reported from southeast of Faizabad on the night of 12-13 April.

There has been no change to the Badghis frontline.

Law and order

Incidents of harassment of local and international UN staff have been reported, along with an increase in vehicle searches.

EU mission to Afghanistan

A 21-person EU mission will head for Afghanistan on 24 April, following two days of meetings with UN agencies in Islamabad. The mission will visit Kabul, Faizabad, and Jalalabad to review assistance programmes and hold discussions with aid workers on the ground.

Environment workshop

The NGO, SAVE (the Society for Afghanistan Volunteer Environmentalists), is to hold a workshop on the environment in Peshawar, 27-29 April 1998. The workshop, which is funded by the Netherlands government, aims to highlight current environmental problems in Afghanistan, identify and recommend priorities for action, and raise awareness of the situation, drawing attention to the impact of a degraded environment on the people of Afghanistan.

UNOPS makes EIA agreement

UNOPS has just signed an agreement with SAVE for environmental impact assessment training. Under this agreement, 100 national professionals, men and women, will be trained in EIA techniques so that they can raise awareness, particularly in P.E.A.C.E. initiative districts, of environmental issues and ensure that all community-led rehabilitation efforts are environmentally sensitive.

Gifts for refugee children

Japanese girl scout leaders handed out gift packages to more than 1,000 Afghan refugee schoolchildren in Peshawar on 20 April. Since 1995, the Japanese scouts have collected more than US\$1 million-worth of gifts and put them together into "peace packs".

Each pack contains educational materials and toys, along with toothpaste, toothbrush, and towels, and a personal message or drawing from the girl and boy scouts who have collected the packs.

ICHR symposium, 14-15 May

The International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting, is holding its third symposium on "Weapons of War; Tools of Peace" in Geneva, 14-15 May. The symposium aims to provide a forum for journalists, human rights advocates, and relief workers to share ideas and information about the special predicaments involved in working in closed conflicts, and to highlight the dilemmas faced by civilians living in closed conflict areas. Discussions will focus on a range of issues and countries, among them: "Compromising in Closed Conflicts and the Effect on Work: Afghanistan".

People wishing to participate should fax ICHR on +41 22 920 1659, or e-mail info.ichr@itu.ch. Registration fee: US\$50, except for journalists who are admitted free of charge.

Nimroz floods

An assessment mission reports that although flooding is widespread, it is not immediately life threatening. IFRC and ARCS are ready to meet emergency needs. There will also be a need for the UN to come in with assistance in rehabilitating agricultural land and providing seeds, fertilizer, etc.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP released 716 tonnes of food for institutional feeding projects throughout the past week. WFP is currently changing the bread cards for the bakery project. New cards are being printed and will be used until 31 August, when another new set of cards will be issued.

WHO, UNICEF, and NGOs are planning for the polio immunization campaign. Guidelines for national immunization days, scheduled to take place in May and June have been provided to the MoPH.

WHO has established a taskforce for malaria control, as this has been identified as a major health hazard in the region. The organization has given guidelines for malaria and anti-malaria drugs to the MoPH.

Medical supplies and materials on safe motherhood have also been provided to the MoPH.

UNCHS/Habitat held a community development workshop in the community centre in District 6. Otherwise, the programme continues to train children in arts, to recycle destroyed buildings' materials in Districts 3, 5, 6, and 7. Work on the Bagh-I-Babur flood protection project is half completed and good progress is reported from the District 6 Qala-I-Nazer ditch construction project.

The Mine Action Programme is providing mine awareness training for workers involved in the Habitat building recycling project.

FAO Crops planted 800 poplar cuttings and monitored demonstration fields in Tizin, one of the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative districts. The programme also prepared land for planting vegetable nurseries in Qala Qazi, another P.E.A.C.E. initiative area.

Western Region

WFP provided UNCHS with 123 tonnes of wheat for participants in drainage and water supply projects, and gave food to IAM for food-for-training. Food was also supplied to IDP camps and to vulnerable families.

UNCHS cleared a record level of solid waste (512 cubic metres) from Herat city.

WHO provided supplies to the Herat and Ghor regional hospitals and to the Abu Hannefa Emergency Shelter and IAM IDP education projects.

FAO Crops supervised and monitored wheat fields in foundation seed farms and obtained 7.5 tonnes of green gram seed under the food-for-seed exchange programme. Some 3,500 boxes of Chinese silkworms are being distributed in Zindajani.

