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**Assistance for Afghanistan
WEEKLY UPDATE**

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Issue No. 250

27 January 1998

From the frontline

The general security situation in the north is unchanged. Although there is evidence that conditions are returning to normal, factional tensions continue to prevail in Mazar-I-Sharif and the surrounding area. In addition, allegedly fierce fighting is being reported from the Baghlan area. On 19 January a security mission to Mazar reopened negotiations with northern leaders preparatory to resumption of UN activities in the region.

Kabul is reported generally quiet, although reports of robberies and killings persist. On 20 January, Radio Shariat reported the seizure of a large quantity of heavy and light weapons in the city. Tagab is reported relatively calm, and there have been no changes to the frontlines.

Bamiyan was subjected to two bombing sorties on 25 and 26 January.

1998 Consolidated Appeal

Copies of the Appeal and accompanying Compendium of Projects have been sent to agencies, NGO coordinating bodies, and Islamabad-based donor representatives. Further copies have been sent to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York and Geneva for onward distribution.

The Appeal will be launched in New York on 4 February by Under-Secretary-General Sergio Vieira de Mello, Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The UN Coordinator for Afghanistan will host a short presentation and discussion session on the Appeal in Islamabad on the same day.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

WFP released 853 tonnes of wheat flour and lentils for bakery and orphanage projects in Kabul.

UNHCR started its winter relief distribution in District 7. The relief package includes two quilts, a blanket, and a plastic sheet per family.

FAO Crops carried out a joint preliminary survey in the new P.E.A.C.E. Initiative districts in Mohammad Agha in Logar and Charasiab and Chardeshi in Kabul Province.

Eastern Region

In the second phase of the Acute Respiratory Infection campaign, 10 districts have been covered in Nangarhar, 10 in Kunar, and 5 in Laghman.

MADERA has started implementing an irrigation project in Kama district, Nangarhar. This will permit farmers to obtain two crops per year instead of one, and will benefit 5,000 families.

Northern Region

During the last week WFP Faizabad distributed 264 tonnes of wheat for 2717 males and 2791 females in district one the city under the Faizabad Emergency Operation. Each beneficiary received 48 kilos of wheat for four months. After the distribution, the price of wheat in the local bazar declined by 7.7%.

No Update

There will be no update next week due to the Eid holiday.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

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Issue No. 251

WEEKLY UPDATE

12 February 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah has donated US\$ 20,000 for the purchase of fuel for warming hospitals in Kabul. The implementing agency is Kuwait Joint Relief Committee.

The Government of Greece has contributed US\$ 10,000 to the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH). Greece has previously provided funds to help to secure the Kabul Museum building and to transfer its collection to the Kabul hotel.

From the frontline

Fighting between the Taliban and the forces of the Northern Alliance continued in the central, northern and western regions throughout the past week. No significant military activity has been reported in the remainder of the country.

Growing tension was reported in Kabul and the Tageb Valley. Air attacks on Northern Alliance positions in the Charikar area and in the Panshir valley were also reported the past week.

The general situation in the north of the country remains unchanged. Factional tension prevails in Mazar-i-Sharif and the surrounding region.

Reports of fighting in Kunduz were received during the past week, including bombing of the airport and Taliban bombing of opposition forces in the Bangi area, west of Taloqan.

The security situation in Herat City is reported to be tense as the incidence of robbery escalates.

Rustaq earthquake

Aid agencies have been battling since Sunday to provide assistance to the victims of last week's earthquake in the Rustaq area of Takhar Province. Seven out of the estimated 15 affected villages have so far been reported completely destroyed. Casualty reports are still sketchy, but there are indications that upwards of 3,000 people may have died. Many hundreds are reported injured, and local medical teams, in coordination with Medicins Sans Frontiers, are working round the clock to treat them. Reports are also coming in that homeless people are congregating in Rustaq in the hope that aid agencies can provide them with help.

Atrocious weather conditions – low cloud, rain and snow – have prevented all but a very few flights from landing at the nearest airstrip, Khajai Ghar. Roads are virtually impassable. A UN/NGO convoy of three trucks, carrying food and shelter materials, left Faizabad, the capital of Badakshan Province, on the morning of 8 February. A convo, carrying 50 tonnes of food left Faizabad on 13 February and immediately got stuck in mud. Road access within the region is extremely restricted, with snow making transport even by donkey quite hazardous. The first Faizabad convoy arrived in Rustaq on 12 February

Agencies are currently attempting to transport supplies and aid workers to the affected villages by all routes and means possible – from Faizabad, Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul, Mazar, Pul-I-Khumri, and also from locations in Tajikistan. Agencies

are now investigating the possibility of air-dropping supplies.

Joint UN, NGO, ICRC, and IFRC coordinating bodies have been established in Kabul, Peshawar, Islamabad, and Rustaq with Medecins Sans Frontiers taking the lead on medical issues, ICRC on non-food items, and the UN of food. United Nations and ICRC planes are transporting personnel and supplies. On Thursday UN and ICRC both managed to land planes at Khajai Ghar.

Earthquake response

The international response to the disaster has been strong, with many governments offering assistance. The UK has already provided US\$ 300,000.

In addition, local organisations have come forward with many kind offers to help. The US Women's Association, for example, is donating clothing for both adults and children.

WHO activities

World Health Organisation has called for 'days of tranquillity' in Afghanistan to ensure immunisation of children against polio. The 3-year polio eradication campaign is a joint effort by various UN agencies, NGOs, and MoPH. It is a three-year campaign and the aim is to immunise approximately four million children under the age of five.

UNICEF and WHO have produced the first issue of an Afghanistan EPI Newsletter. The newsletter, which is published in English and Dari will appear every two months in order to keep field staff informed on issues relating to immunisation. It will also serve as a means of

establishing a dialogue between field staff in Afghanistan and other WHO, UNICEF and NGO staff.

WHO Afghanistan has also launched a health education and awareness campaign through mosques in Kandahar and Jalalabad. The objective is to improve health practices and to raise awareness of the importance of safe water, adequate sanitation and hygiene in disease prevention.

Mine Action

The Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, on 8 February visited the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan. Mr Downer had the opportunity to observe manual mine clearance techniques and the use of dogs to detect mines. He met with senior UNOCHA and MAPA officials and directors and staff of mine action NGOs.

In a speech, he announced a further contribution of AUD 500,000 for the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan. Mr Downer indicated the Australian Government's firm commitment to the anti-landmine cause as evidenced by Australia's signing of the Ottawa Treaty on 3 December 1997.

CDAP

Comprehensive Disabled Afghan's Project, CDAP, is striving to focus attention on women in a bid to encourage and promote self-sufficiency and development in the Afghan family life. In line with this objective, the Employment Support section of CDAP has successfully completed a series of two-month female vocational training in tailoring and quilting. The group consisted of 54 disabled women. At the end of these

courses they were provided with loans to develop self-employment opportunities with their skills. Another course is being run for 20 disabled women.

IDEA

Integrated Development and Enterprise Association, IDEA, is an NGO, established in June 1997 and registered at the Ministry of Planning of Afghanistan in November 1997. The objective of the organisation is to provide support to relief activities and technical and managerial services in assessment, design and implementation of rehabilitation activities. The organisation will focus on the development and use of appropriate technologies and the promotion of income-generating enterprises.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

UNHCR continued its relief distribution for the families in Kabul City. The distribution started in District 7 and so far 3,500 beneficiary families have received two quilts, one blanket and plastic sheeting

WFP released 413 tonnes of wheat flour for subsidised bread sales. The number of beneficiaries is approximately 264,000. In a food-for-work project 53 tonnes of wheat were distributed.

WHO held meetings with NGOs to prepare for the proposed 'Health Planning Workshop', to be held in Kabul between 11 and 22 February. NGOs and UN agencies involved in health programmes, will share information about their activities during the workshop.

WHO delivered 400kg of anti-tuberculosis drugs to Ghazni Province. The drugs were sent to a WHO supported TB

centre and it will provide treatment for 300 patients.

Eastern Region

In Kunar Province, many girls are attending home-based schools. The curriculum includes maths, science, language and religious subjects. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan is the main organisation for supporting the schools.

Maternal mortality is reported to be high in Kunar due to lack of access to services. Many deliveries are fatal, but mothers are forced to give birth at home because of the long distance to services and lack of transportation.

The fourth regional workshop on the Common Assistance Programme and the 1999 Consolidated Appeal was held at the Regional Coordination Office in Jalalabad. Thirty five UN and NGO representatives attended the workshop.

Northern Region

Focus Humanitarian Assistance Europe Foundation assisted 187 families who were expelled by a local commander near Mazar-i-Sharif. The families are housed near a school in Pul-I-Khumri, and Focus Europe has so far provided cash equivalent of 50 kg of wheat and cooking oil to each family. Another 650 families who had to leave Haibak City in Samangan were given the same support. 150 of these are in Mazar and the remaining in Pul-I-Khumri.

20 students from Balkh University received support from Focus Europe to undertake a six-month course in English.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 253

24 February 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Netherlands Government has pledged US\$250,000 to support the Rustaq Relief Operation, and US\$493,000 to the Mine Action Programme.

From the frontline

Heavy fighting has been reported from north of Kabul. Fighting has also been reported from Laghman, Kunar, and Kunduz. There have been reports that UN staff have been harassed at checkpoints in the Paktia region.

Minister Pronk's visit

On his return to the Netherlands after a five-day visit to Afghanistan, Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Jan Pronk noted that he had perceived a new willingness to move forward on the issue of girls' education and proposed that the UN establish a fund to support this.

USG Sergio de Mello's visit

The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator visited Kabul, Faizabad, and Kandahar. His attempt to visit the earthquake-stricken area of Rustaq was foiled by bad weather.

Floods in the south

Floods have swept through southern Afghanistan, destroying homes, washing away orchards and gardens and killing livestock. A preliminary survey by ARCS indicates

that Arghandab and Kandahar City have been affected, as well as Panjwai, Maiwand, and parts of Kandahar Province. Villages between Sangin, Grishk and Lashkar Gah on the Helmand River have also been affected, as have areas around the confluence of the Arghandab and Helmand Rivers.

Aid agencies are dividing up responsibility for relief actions, with ICRC and IFRC taking care, via the ARCS, of immediate food and shelter needs. The UN will look into longer-term food requirements, drinking water, medical care, and rehabilitation of the economic base.

Rustaq earthquake

Appalling weather conditions continue to hinder efforts to provide aid to the victims of the 4 February Rustaq earthquake.

ICRC and the UN have so far managed to drop two planeloads of supplies, and are now in the process of acquiring a second cargo plane to airlift goods such as tents, vehicles, and generators that cannot be dropped. The first lift is scheduled to take place later this week - weather permitting.

Road conditions in the immediate area are so bad (deep mud and, very often, thick snow) that they are virtually impassable. The only way to move about by vehicle is to do so early in the morning before the frost melts. Later in the day, agencies are resorting to using donkeys.

Staff on the ground emphasize the desperate need for shelter materials. They

they do not currently need additional medical supplies, and report that immediate medical needs are being provided for at present.

Further tremors were felt in the area throughout the week, and a second major earthquake registering 6.1 occurred on the evening of 20 February, but no damage or loss of life has been reported so far.

Humanitarian update Central Region

UNHCR is conducting a house-to-house survey in Ghazni to assess levels of food security.

UNHCR has so far distributed winter relief packages to 2,000 out of a target of 4,500 families.

UNCHS (Habitat) reports that community centres are now functioning in districts 3, 6, and 7 of Kabul.

FAO has begun to distribute spring wheat seeds in Kabul District: a total of 45 tonnes of seeds, plus DAP and urea will be provided to farmers. FAO has acquired 25 tonnes of maize seeds in Kabul and 25 tonnes

in Logar, via ISRA. ISRA will distribute 10 tonnes of spring wheat seeds with chemical fertilizer in both Kabul and Logar.

Agencies working in the Mine Action Programme have all now registered with the Ministry of Planning.

Northern Region

Over the past two weeks WFP has distributed 904 tonnes of wheat to just under 20,000 men and women in Districts 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Faizabad. In the past, the price of wheat and other foods has tended to increase over the Eid period: this year, prices fell by almost 20 per cent, as a result of the distribution.

FAO has planted out trial plots of wheat, chick peas, lentils, and barley in the Takhar/Taloqan research station. The organization has also planted wheat for multiplication purposes and distributed 7.5 tonnes of wheat to farmers for further seed multiplication. Trial plots have also been planted in Kunduz.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 255

10 March 1998

Pledges and contributions

To date, US\$157,308 have been received against the 1998 Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan. Andalucia, the Church World Service, the EC, Greece, the Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah), and the Netherlands have all contributed.

From the frontline

Fighting continues north of Kabul. A rocket was fired into the city on 7 March but no casualties were reported.

Fighting is still going on in Kunduz. Intrafactional-skirmishes have been reported between troops loyal to Massoud and Rab-bani in southwestern Takhar. On 2 March, it was reported that an international NGO aid worker was robbed and badly beaten in Kunduz by pro-Taliban troops while en route between Takhar to Mazar.

The Badghis frontline remains unchanged, although there are indications that troops are being redeployed to this front.

Reports of fighting in Kunar and the northern parts of Laghman continue.

International women's day

On 8 March, the UN Secretary-General drew attention to two key issues: violence against women, and women and armed conflict. The Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that "among societies in conflict or crisis, women and girls are especially affected".

Referring to the plight of women in conflict in countries ranging from Afghanistan to Rwanda, from Algeria to Sierra Le-

one, the Secretary-General alluded to the recent inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan. He said the mission "found that after 18 years of war, the needs for international assistance are compelling; yet policies that exclude women from participating in and benefitting from the provision of such assistance – whether directly or indirectly – not only contravene established human rights standards but may also gravely compromise the effect of that assistance."

He went on to say: "I appeal to all parties in Afghanistan and other countries where women's rights are suppressed to recognize the rights of women and girls to education, health, employment, freedom of movement and association, and protection of the person, and to take concrete action to these ends."

He concluded: "Let us spread the message that women's rights are the responsibility of all humankind, that combatting all forms of violence against women is the duty of all humankind; and that achieving the empowerment of women is the advancement of all humankind."

1998's first refugees go home

On 5 March the first group of refugees to return this year left Peshawar for their home village of Goraik, Nangarhar. A total of 527 refugees went home, under the new group repatriation scheme launched last summer by UNHCR.

UNHCR is currently holding discussions with 29 groups now living in

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Pakistan's NWFP and Baluchistan provinces. A second group of around 3,500 people from Dandwa Pattan district in Paktia plans to return before the end of March.

The group repatriation scheme, which runs parallel to the existing repatriation assistance given to individual families, involves identifying groups from specific locations who wish to go home but are unable to do so for a variety of physical and socio-economic reasons. UNHCR works with the refugees and a consortium of other UN agencies and NGOs to carry out activities such as reclaiming land, rebuilding houses, improving drainage, etc.

Floods

Aid agencies are currently assessing rehabilitation needs in southern Afghanistan, following last month's floods. Priorities include repairing irrigation canals to protect—those crops that have survived, and rebuilding houses.

Rustaq earthquake

Airdrop operations have now been replaced with airlifts. Some 500 tonnes of relief items, mainly food, will be carried on 34 flights over the next two weeks. Two Tajik Air helicopters have been hired to transport supplies to villages that are inaccessible by road, and to shuttle provisions from Khojar Ghar airstrip to Rustaq. Some 450 tonnes of food have now arrived from Tajikistan.

ICRC, MSF, and other agencies have largely completed relief assistance activities and have scaled down or completely withdrawn staff. MERLIN aim to remain in the region to carry out medical surveillance over the next few months. UN agencies and other NGOs are working out

what form of rehabilitation assistance they might be able to provide.

WFP has undertaken to maintain food supplies up to 1,000 tonnes during the rehabilitation phase.

Health & education resources

IRC has handed over its Health and Education Resource Centre (HERC) to ACBAR in Peshawar. HERC has built up more than 10 years' experience in producing educational and public health materials which are silkscreened onto cloth, plastic, wood, metal, etc. Its products have been awarded prizes by both UNDCP and UNESCO.

ACBAR/HERC will continue to provide services to the aid community, and welcomes queries, suggestions, and commissions.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

A two-week health sector planning workshop sponsored by WHO and UNICEF has ended. The workshop recommended ways to improve health service development with particular emphasis on equity and coverage of primary healthcare services throughout the country.

WFP released 689 tonnes of food to various projects.

The UNCHS-initiated community centre in District 3 is now running basic education programmes for Grades 1 and 2.

GAA, with support from UNICEF, has so far renovated 90 latrines in District 15. GAA is also disseminating information on sanitation and hygiene, via 8 female staff members from the MoPH.

A meeting on extended programmes of immunization resulted in a number of suggestions as to how to improve activities through 1998.

Eastern Region

UNICEF handed over two chlorinated wells to the community in Qarghai district, Laghman, and has helped communities in Surkhrod with construction of two more wells. A major hygiene-awareness campaign has also been conducted in Surkhrod. Work will shortly begin on a 1,000 latrine project in Jalalabad city.

MADERA has carried out a vaccination programme in 17 districts of Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan, to combat contagious diseases.

UNHCR has launched a new community-based project to rehabilitate the Baghi intake reservoir in Khost. The aim is to provide irrigation water for 22 villages and thereby attract refugees to return from Pakistan.

WHO continues to clean karezes and the Jalalabad reservoir.

Afghan German TTP has trained 40 people disabled by landmines in shoe-making and tailoring. A new training course started on 2 March. AGTTP plans to develop a cooperative to support trainees once they have finished their courses.

Southern Region

UNOPS has almost completed restoration of the building that will house staff from UNOPS, FAO and UNCHS working on the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative. Common P.E.A.C.E. initiative offices are also being

built in Bala Buluk and Khak-e-Safed.

Work has begun on construction of five community centres in Khak-e-Safed, seven in Bala Buluk, and five in Bakwa. The centres will provide locations for e.g. vocational training, and educational and literacy activities.

UNOPS is rehabilitating the Khak-e-Safed canal intake. This will irrigate 800 hectares of farmland and prevent flooding.

Western Region

A provincial coordination meeting of UN agencies, and NGOs took place in Farah on 9 March.

Rehabilitation of drainage canals in Herat by UNCHS, the municipality, and local communities prevented streets from being flooded after the recent heavy rains. Drain rehabilitation continues in various parts of the city.

WHO ran refresher courses in 25 locations for health supervisors and workers, vaccinators and volunteers.

UNICEF provided IAM with notebooks and pencils for schools in the IDP camps, and donated supplies to Herat Civil Hospital.

FAO continued with spring planting of wheat and vegetables.

The Mine Action Programme is focussing on work in P.E.A.C.E. initiative districts of Farah and in outlying districts of Herat province.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 256

17 March 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Swedish government will contribute US\$4,900,000 against the 1998 Appeal. The donation will support mine action, co-ordination, immunization, the P.E.A.C.E. initiative, and FAO activities.

Two donations have been announced for the UN Mine Action Programme: the government of the USA is to donate US\$1 million and the government of Australia US\$335,550.

Visa restrictions

On 10 March UNDP/UNOCHA received a letter from the Afghan embassy in Islamabad indicating that foreign muslim women working for aid agencies are henceforth required to travel with a close male family member. A number of UN international staff members have already been refused visas because they are female Muslims travelling alone on UN mission. Another has been requested to leave the country.

The UN is currently seeking clarification on the issue.

From the frontline

Fighting between the Taliban and the forces of the Northern Alliance continues, while a fresh outbreak of interfactional conflict has erupted in the North.

Kabul city is said to have been quiet, although reports of lawlessness, looting, beating and harassment of civilians in the southern districts of Kabul have been received. On 7 March, a large calibre

rocket landed close to a residential area near the airport. On 11 March, a heavy anti-aircraft weapon barrage took place in the central parts of the city, but no opposition air activity was observed. Direct flights to Kabul by the UN aircraft have resumed.

Following a large faction meeting in Mazar city last week, interfactional fighting broke out in Hairation and Mazar on 14 March. The situation has been described as very tense, with the city being jointly controlled by six factions. Further looting and criminal activity by people bearing arms has been reported. On 16 March, 19 aid workers were relocated from the city. A small number of medical experts remain.

Reports of fighting in Kunduz continue. No change to the Badghis front line has been reported. Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman Provinces. There was a shooting incident between the Taliban and Pakistani border guards on Saturday, 14 March.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

Aid agencies met in Kabul on 10 and 11 March to reappraise the winter relief programme, in an effort to re-evaluate the effectiveness of relief in 1997 as a basis of a focused programme for 1998-99. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated to all concerned.

WHO has completed rehabilitation of the Kabul radiology institute's X-ray machines, which had not functioned for

many years. The institute will now be used for both clinical and training purposes.

WHO is finalizing the plan of action document formulated during the recent health sector planning workshop.

UNICEF continued work on installation and rehabilitation of hand pumps in Carkhi village, Khawar District, Logar, providing safe drinking water for 250 people.

UNHCR carried with its distribution of relief items and WFP distributed 625 tonnes of food.

Eastern Region

The surgical ward and theatre at the Methalm Hospital, Laghman, is now ready to receive equipment and begin dealing with obstetrical emergencies. A mission from the EU and AMI spent a month in the hospital helping to set up and show staff how to use the equipment, evaluating and working with the Afghan surgical team to ensure provision of emergency services in the surgical ward.

WFP approved 380 tonnes of mixed food for feeding programmes targeting 470 malnourished children and 790 vulnerable pregnant and lactating women for the first six months. The Islamic Relief Agency (ISRA) and MCH clinics will be implementing these programmes in Mehterlam, Jalalabalad and Rodat Districts. WFP committed 469 tonnes of mixed food for a period of one year to 1,000 TB patients under a new phase of the WHO TB control programme. In the past six months, 500 TB patients have received regular food assistance to enhance their chances of recovery and motivate regular visits to the TB clinics.

Two pumps were installed in the UNICEF-supported RRD-managed water and sanitation demonstration centre in Jalalabad, which contains models of la-

trines and wells appropriate for different conditions. Training is being organized for RRD technical personnel in water and environmental sanitation improvement and health education. UNICEF completed drilling of two wells in Qarghaie District of Laghman.

UNICEF female staff members participated in a meeting organized by a group of Afghan women, supported by a NGO, to celebrate international women's day. Women spoke about the deprivation of their human rights while UNICEF advocated a creation of a "Mother Friendly Society". The women said that they were sad because they were denied access to work, access to meet with others and access to education. The meeting was marked by a general consensus that the women of Afghanistan are waiting for the day when Afghan women will enjoy basic human rights so that they can live with dignity as equal in a free society. It should be noted that the husbands of these women had encouraged them to participate in this meeting.

Continuing its relief and rehabilitation operations, the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah for Afghanistan has provided funds for the first round of Mass Polio Campaign-Sub National Immunization Day. A total of 11 districts bordering Pakistan in Nangarhar Province were covered and about 100,600 children under five years of age received the oral polio vaccine. The operation was executed by the Kuwait Joint Relief Committee, Peshawar, in collaboration with REMT, WHO, and UNICEF. The second round of the campaign will be implemented in due course. The total amount pledged by the bank for the operation is US\$40,000.

Northern Region

On 1 April, a comprehensive micro-credit programme, including research and training

for interested agencies, will be set up in Yakawlang District, Bamiyan Province, following a recent agreement between UNOPS and Ockenden Venture. The micro-credit programme, in line with the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative, is expected to provide credit to more than 2,000 small entrepreneurs, thereby facilitating the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

Western Region

WFP has distributed a total of 84 tonnes of wheat and some other essential food items in rations of 100kg each to vulnerable families in Districts 1 to 5 of Herat city. This is a one-off distribution, targeting around 5,000 female or disabled-person headed households. A survey of similar needy or vulnerable families and individuals is going on in Districts 6 to 8 in Herat.

WHO provided equipment to the X-ray department in Herat City Hospital and to Gulran and Korokh Basic Health Centres. More than 95,000 children under five years old were vaccinated against polio on 5 and 6 March. Vaccination campaigns have been organized in eight districts of Herat and Farah provinces.

UNCHS continues to repair drainage canals and to resurface roads in various parts of the city. UNCHS is also assisting in construction of public latrines.

Under the Food-for-Seed scheme carried out by FAO Crops, WFP, and local farmers, rice and maize seed have been exchanged for wheat.

Fourteen poultry farmers received refresher training during the past week. FAO Livestock expects to conduct similar training for 110 men and 30 women by the end of the programme. Meanwhile, 49,000 doses of enterotoxaemia vaccine have been distributed to seven veterinary field units in Herat.

Southern Region

UN agencies, notably WFP, are working with the IFRC and ARCS to assess flood damage and distribute emergency relief items in the southern region. The current planning figure for this emergency phase is 1,200 families. Meanwhile, UNOSP and FAO are surveying rehabilitation needs, with the assistance of two engineers provided by the regional administration.

UNOPS organized a study tour to Balochistan, Pakistan, for members of the District Development Committee of Panjwai District in Kandahar. The tour enabled members to interact with communities and exchange ideas on similar programmes and experiences. The tour was particularly successful in raising awareness on income-generation activities for women, on health projects, and on the need for truly participatory and democratic shuras, where accountability and transparency are guiding principles. Meanwhile, the community organizations facilitated by UNOPS in Panjwai and Arghandab Districts have proved to be instrumental in speeding up the flood assessment process and ensuring rapid and appropriate distribution of relief items.

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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 257

24 March 1998

Pledges and contributions

Almost five per cent of this year's Consolidated Appeal has been pledged so far.

Recent contributions include a donation from pupils at Chuou Nogyo High School, Japan, who raised US\$267 to support the Mine Action Programme.

From the frontline

UN offices remain closed in Mazar, following last week's armed clashes between troops loyal to the Junbesh and Wahdat factions. A peace rally held in the city on 24 March was disrupted when gunmen fired on demonstrators.

Fighting continues in Kunduz, with pro-Taliban gains being reported from areas to the west of the city.

There has been no change on the Badghis frontline, although there are reports of heavy reinforcement activity on both sides.

Sporadic anti-aircraft fire has been heard from positions near Kabul airport, and exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have occurred to the north and northeast of the city.

Guerrilla activities reportedly continue in Kunar and Laghman provinces.

Suspension in Kandahar

UN offices in Kandahar were temporarily closed on 24 March, and international staff withdrawn. UN assistance programmes in the region are all on hold, pending written assurances from the Taliban authorities that

UN agencies will be granted the level of respect and security required for them to operate.

In a statement made in New York, USG Sergio Vieira de Mello said "I deeply regret the factors which led to this decision and the impact on our ability to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the Afghan people in the Kandahar region."

The suspension came about as a result of an increasing tendency on the part of the authorities to interfere with UN programme design and implementation, and an upsurge in harassment of UN staff which culminated in three physical assaults on UN officials in UN offices in the past week.

Rustaq report

Reports from the earthquake-affected area indicate that emergency distribution of 682 tonnes of food to villages has been completed. The airlift of supplies from Peshawar to Khwajar Ghar has now ceased, and the overland food pipeline from Dushanbe has also been stopped.

An interagency mission travelled to the area on 20 March to assess rehabilitation needs and possible future interventions. Meanwhile, WFP is to maintain a storekeeper, car, and driver. ICRC and IFRC intend to remain in the area for the next two months. Oxfam and Concern plan to restore clean drinking water and construct around 600 temporary latrines. ACTED aims to work on roads, and to pro-

rehabilitation and development by training female field workers from target communities. As part of its training programme, CDAP has launched the second part of its female Mid-level Rehabilitation Worker training in Wardak, Takhar and Mazar regions. The programme includes training 32 female rehabilitation workers in Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Animation, and Gender issues. Jointly run by CDAP, Swedish Committee and Radda Barnen, the course will prepare the field workers to help empower disabled women in their respective areas.

Amputee bicyclists

The Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation (AABRAR) is an NGO working to help disabled people in Jalalabad. Activities include a bicycle riding course, at the end of which participants receive a bicycle which enables them to move about. Among other programmes are physiotherapy services, reconstructive plastic surgery, a disabled orphans' sponsorship programme, sports events for disabled people, bicycle and wheelchair maintenance training, and training in tailoring skills.

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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 258

31 March 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Government of Japan has pledged just over US\$2.2 million to a consortium of UN agencies to fund a wide range of rehabilitation activities in the districts of Azro and Tizin, eastern Afghanistan. Priorities were identified as a result of extensive discussions with refugee groups in Pakistan and community organizations in Afghanistan. The integrated programme links the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. Initiative with UNHCR's new group repatriation scheme.

UN airfares reduced by 50%

A UK government contribution to UNOCHA Flight Operations, made against the 1998 Consolidated Appeal, makes it possible to reduce airfares by 50 per cent for all passengers on flights to Afghanistan until the end of the calendar year.

From the frontline

Mazar continues to be controlled by six factions, but efforts are reportedly under way to demilitarize the city. A number of people are reported, however, to have taken the opportunity to leave the city for more secure areas.

Fighting has been reported from Kunduz, where NIMA's 20th Division is said to have switched allegiance to the Taliban. Aerial bombing sorties have been conducted over Pul-I-Khumri, and heavy artillery and rocket fire is being exchanged. The roads from Hairaton to Mazar and

Mazar to Pul-I-Khumri are reportedly closed.

UNICEF chief executive visits

Carol Bellamy, Chief Executive of UNICEF, arrives in Afghanistan on 1 April for a three-day visit.

UN negotiating mission

A UN negotiating team is to visit Kabul to discuss restrictions of movement and travel by Muslim women, working conditions in the field, declining security and incidents involving UN staff, as well as women's access to health and education in Taliban-controlled parts of the country.

The mission, which will comprise representatives from a number of UN agencies and the NGO community, will take place after the forthcoming Eid.

Strategic Framework

The UN Administrative Committee for Co-ordination met in Geneva last week. On the agenda: the draft Strategic Framework for Afghanistan and the draft Assistance Strategy. Supporting the process, the UN Secretary General entrusted Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General, with responsibility for developing the Strategic Framework initiative and for ensuring that the process in Afghanistan reaches a successful outcome. Her tasks will include making sure that lessons learnt in Afghanistan are shared and acted upon; that genuine partnership and ownership of the process – both

the community to irrigate 500 jeribs of land and access safe drinking water.

WFP released 417 tonnes of wheat for food for work programmes over the past week.

UNHCR supported a vocational training programme for 25 visually impaired returnees run by the Afghan Association for the Blind.

The Aschiana street children programme is to provide vocational training for 250 working street children for a further eight months.

WHO and the MoPH ran a public awareness campaign for World Tuberculosis Day, revealing that between 12,000 and 13,000 people die in Afghanistan every year from TB. Around 70 per cent of TB cases are women. WHO has started to encourage the development of policies and guidelines for dealing with communicable diseases. Some 400kg of supplies were distributed to hospitals in Kabul and Uruzgan.

UNICEF held a preliminary meeting with NGO and MoPH representatives to draft a framework for the national EPI strategy. SCA has handed over responsibility for EPI operations in Logar and Wardak to the MoPH. Dissemination of information on sanitation and hygiene has been launched in Bini-Hesar and Qalacha.

Eastern Region

WFP has agreed to support a new Jalalabad city sanitation improvement project to be implemented by WHO. Under this project, a one-time clean-up of waste will be carried out in those residential districts of Jalalabad which have not been covered in previous sanitation improvement schemes. Sanitation systems in those localities will also be carried out.

WFP committed 496 tonnes of mixed food to support the new phase of WHO one-year TB control programme.

1,000 patients and their families are expected to benefit from this project which will enhance their chances of recovery. Under a similar project, which concluded recently, 500 TB patients received mixed rations from WFP.

A WHO malaria consultant conducted two workshops on clinical management of malaria. Sixty health personnel (both male and female) participated in these workshops which were jointly organized by MoPH and WHO in Jalalabad. WHO continues to implement its water and sanitation programme in the region through rehabilitation and cleaning of karezes and the Jalalabad water system reservoir.

UNICEF supported drilling of two wells in Qarghaie. Labour was provided by the community while UNICEF provided gravel packing, casing and filters for each well. UNICEF installed a handpump on a borewell in the sanitation demonstration centre in Jalalabad. This model will be used for training programmes in the region. A two-day orientation workshop for primary healthcare and safe motherhood situation analysis was organized in five out of six districts of Laghman by the provincial health authority with technical and financial support from UNICEF. Fifteen people participated in this workshop. Local shuras were formed in the villages of Sabzaabad and Shamshapoor as a result of a meeting organized by the social mobilizers of the rural rehabilitation department in Surkhrod, Nangarhar province. The shuras will identify priority community needs to help prepare a plan of action for implementation through the RRD with UNICEF support. The strategy document for conducting the PHC baseline situation analysis was prepared in a meeting attended by the Laghman provincial health management team, UNICEF and NGOs (including ISRA, IFRC, SCA and HEWAD) are in-

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 259

14 April 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Government of Denmark donated US\$500,000 to WHO against the 1997 Consolidated Appeal. The funds supported polio immunization activities.

From the frontline

Mazar-I-Sharif is still jointly controlled by six factions, with no move yet being made to carry out the agreed demilitarization of the city. Forces loyal to General Dostum continue to hold their positions at Dehdadi, Shahrak, and Hairaton Junction. Fighting continues in Kunduz and Baghlan.

More intense exchanges of artillery and rocket fire have been reported from areas to the north and northeast of Kabul.

Brahimi visit

Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, has left Pakistan for Iran. So far, in his discussions with the various Afghan factions and governments in neighbouring countries, Brahimi has emphasized the need for a strict embargo on arms entering Afghanistan, and the responsibility of Iran and Pakistan to ensure that this is enforced. He has encouraged Afghan factions to work towards a negotiated peace that will result in a broad-based government, and has welcomed the current efforts to bring together *ulema* from both sides as a first step towards peace talks. He has drawn attention to the need for an improvement in human rights, particularly in regard to women. The Ambassador will present a full report on his

mission to the Secretary General on his return to New York.

Bellamy visit

Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, is the most senior UN woman to visit Kabul since the Taliban takeover in 1996. Bellamy visited Kabul on 1 April, and met with representatives of the Taliban movement to flag up key issues to be discussed at the forthcoming UN/Taliban talks. These include the edict forbidding foreign Muslim women from travelling without a close male relative; the basic ground rules that need to be observed if the UN is to remain engaged in the country; access to civilians in areas blocked by armed forces, and the requirement that women and men have equal access to healthcare and education.

Bellamy also visited project sites in Kabul and Jalalabad, and met with Afghan women and members of the UN and NGO communities. She left Jalalabad with a message from the women she had met there, calling urgently for peace, freedom, and an environment in which problems such as education and access to services for women could be addressed.

She then went on to Islamabad where she held a press conference and addressed a meeting of the Afghanistan Task Force.

SCF mines awareness book

Save the Children (USA) has published a new book for children containing games, activities, stories and poems to help chil-

Ghato villages, Sarobi, and working on canal rehabilitation in Bandole (also in Sarobi) to ensure year-round irrigation.

FAO Crops prepared land for sweetcorn and rice nurseries and planted different kinds of vegetable seeds for seed production/multiplication purposes at the Sheshambagh research station.

WFP supplied UNHCR with 100 tonnes of wheat to support the group repatriation scheme. Over the past week, 50 families who had repatriated to Nangarhar each received 300kg wheat. WFP is also providing wheat to repatriating families who are rebuilding their houses: 2,500 families going home to Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman will each receive 350kg wheat while they rebuild their houses.

Northern Region

Donkeys, cars, and helicopters were all used in a WFP distribution of wheat, pulses, vegetable oil, and to earthquake victims in Malwan village, in the Shahre Bozurg district of Badakhshan.

WFP has approved a food-for-work flood protection project in Mala Dara district of Faizabad city. WHO will provide \$29,000 and WFP 151 tonnes of food. The aim is to reduce the damage caused by spring flooding of the nearby Kokcha river.

WFP also provided 139 tonnes of wheat to 11,500 beneficiaries in Districts 5 and 6 of Faizabad city, and 5 tonnes to 100 participants in food-for-training programmes.

Southern Region

DACAAR has been improving 70 wells and handpumps in Shamalzai, Zabul. The community provided unskilled labour, free of charge, to carry out this project which aims to provide clean drinking water and water-related health education with a view

to reducing the incidence of water-borne diseases.

All UN activities remain suspended in this region.

Western Region

UNOPS is distributing silkworm eggs in Zindajan and Herat, as the first phase in a new income-generation project.

FAO Crops weeded 20 hectares of wheat fields and monitored foundation seed farms and powdery mildew demonstrations in Herat province.

A group of FAO veterinarians is visiting Nimroz to investigate reports of outbreaks of livestock disease due to local concern that these could lead to an epidemic.

Meanwhile, in Herat, FAO has distributed enterohaemia and black quarter vaccines to Veterinary Field Units.

UNICEF and WHO have provided supplies to medical centres.

UNCHS has removed 384 cubic metres of solid waste and improved drains in different parts of the city. Improvements are being made to the Sultan Agha water supply network.

UNHCR and MSF are involving IDPs living in Shahidahi in improving the camp's sanitation facilities.

MSF has opened a mother and child healthcare and a basic healthcare clinic in Goryan district. A village healthcare committee has been established in Goryan town.

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Assistance for Afghanistan
WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 275

04 August 1998

From the frontline

The general situation is calm in Kabul although rocket attacks directed at the airport took place on 27 and 28 July. UN flights to Kabul resumed on restricted basis, commencing on 28 July.

Since 12 July, Maimana, in the Northwest of the country, has been the site of continuous fighting as the Northern Alliance moved to contain the Taliban incursion. High civilian casualties are reported to have been sustained during the intense house to house fighting. On 1 August a strong Taliban force moved to capture the towns of Andkhoy and Shiberghan; the latter being Dostum's headquarter and logistic base. One of the main consequences is a large scale movement of civilians from Shiberghan to Mazar, and from Mazar to safer provinces. Although, Mazar city remained relatively quiet, increasing number of people have left the city during the past week and lawless activity is reportedly beginning to re-emerge. Fighting on both Kunduz fronts continues.

On 28 July, a WFP chartered aircraft was hit by rifle fire during its approach into Faizabad, Badakhshan Province.

A number of clashes in Laghman Province were reported as the Taliban reportedly launched fresh operations against Northern Alliance guerrillas. A Taliban mission through Kunar Province on 27 July managed to reopen the road to Asadabad, however UN missions to Kunar remain suspended.

Impact of aid suspensions in Kabul

The impact of the widespread suspensions of NGO-implemented assistance programmes is being felt directly in many quarters. The civilian population, for the time being, is coping with the difficulties that they face.

However, the cumulative effect of the health and water supply reductions will have severe consequences on the urban population.

The collective efforts of international organisations to plan and prepare for relief activities during the coming winter have been disrupted by the withdrawal of a significant proportion of the implementing organisations.

The suspensions come at a time when a number of key players in the relief sector (including the ICRC) were involved in radical re-assessments of their collective approach into the winter of 1998/9.

Rehabilitation of Kabul Polytechnic building

In spite of the departure of NGOs, rehabilitation work has begun on the Polytechnic premises, under the auspices of the Taliban Authorities.

**Humanitarian Updates
Central Highlands**

WHO and the Ministry of Public Health report an increase in the number of diarrhoea cases in Bamyan town. Health surveillance

has been stepped up including health education in affected villages. An isolation ward has been set up in the Iranian Red Crescent Hospital.

Central Region

An in-service training on disease surveillance particularly for diarrhoeal diseases was conducted in Kabul to strengthen reporting system. The seasonal increase of diarrhoeal diseases in the Kabul city is under strong surveillance. Through a quick survey of the overall health situation in Kabul, WHO has found that a considerable number of feeding centres, mainly therapeutic have closed down.

The celebration of World Breast-feeding Week started on 1 August in two maternity hospitals and 29 MCH clinics. The said 31 camps will deliver messages on breast-feeding and consult mothers facing breast-feeding problems along the week.

A three days immunisation session took place in an IDP camp in Dasht-e-Barchi (Kabul) and all children under two years were immunised under supervision of UNICEF.

Eastern Region

FAO Crops conducted a nursery management course in collaboration with MADERA, one of its implementing partners, in Laghman Province. 25 nursery growers including ten nursery growers from Azra and Tezin were trained.

Northern Region

FAO Crops monitored contract seed growers wheat field, rain-fed seed increase plots and selected a couple of sites for establishing rice crop Farmer Field Demonstrations in Sholgara District of Mazar Province.

Southern Region

FAO Crops irrigated the research farm for land preparation, and distributed mineral fertilizer to 17 maize crop Farmer Fields Demonstrations in five P.E.A.C.E. Initiative --selected districts in Kandahar.

Western Region

UNICEF has provided supplies to dispensaries and hospitals in Herat, Ghor and IDP camps.

UNCHS completed 2,200 metres of the city main drainage project and evaluated, with community groups, the tailoring and carpet weaving projects.

WFP distributed 165 tonnes of wheat for the food-for-seed project in Farah and FAO horticulture project in Obeh and Chest-i-Sharif, Herat.

FAO Crops with Okenden Venture held a training course on vegetable seed and crop production.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No.273

21 July 1998

Pledges and contributions

The Government of Denmark has announced a donation for US\$738,552 to support UNOCHA Mine Clearance Programme for Afghanistan

Departure of NGOs from Kabul

Most international NGOs left Kabul before Sunday's deadline for all aid agencies to relocate to the Polytechnic building or close down their offices.

In the last two weeks the number of international aid workers has fallen from around 200 to less than 45.

Suspension of aid to Afghanistan

The European Union has suspended funding to all humanitarian activities in Kabul city. The suspension will remain in force until conditions for operations in Kabul have improved and it is possible for agencies to operate and deliver aid in an equitable, non-discriminatory and principled manner, with no threats to the security of their personnel or equipment. The Commission in Brussels will review this decision at a later date.

Two UN local staff killed in Jalalabad

Mohamed Basharyar, clerk, WFP, and Mohammad Habibi, Programme Assistant, UNHCR, who were abducted by unidentified men in Jalalabad on 13 July, were found dead over the weekend. The bodies were recovered from rivers in Behsud District of Kabul and Lalpur District of Jalalabad.

According to the witnesses, the abduction took place near the local university where they had both been professors.

From the frontline

Fighting continues in the front-line area north of Kabul, but no significant change to troop dispositions has been reported. Low intensity fighting continues in Tagab Valley, northeast of Kabul and also on the Jalrez front, west of Kabul.

Large numbers of Northern Alliance troop reinforcements have been flown in to the area from Bamyan and Mazar.

The Taliban advance troops located close to Shirin Tagab has been cut off from their main base in Maimana, and an Alliance forces blockade around the provincial capital is still holding, according to reliable sources.

Humanitarian Updates

Central Highland Region

Under planned group repatriation, another 105 families returned from refugee camps in Pakistan to Khak-e-Jabar (Kabul) on 17 July 1998.

A five-day ORT, education, sanitation and hygiene campaign took place in Kabul. Preparations included training medical staff, community elders, mullahs, teachers, and media reporters.

UNICEF supported construction of wells and installation of handpumps in Kabul and Logar Provinces.

WHO provided supplies for malaria, leishmaniasis and TB patients in Kabul and Wardak Provinces.

FAO distributed 4,000 day-old chickens to the Kabul Poultry Association at a significantly subsidised rate of Afs.5,000 per chick.

The IDP women's committee in Shiekh Ali District of Parwan Province is implementing a UNHCR-supported income generation project on handicrafts.

WFP distributed 85 tonnes of wheat to over 10,000 vulnerable people in Sheikh Ali District, and 50 tonnes of wheat flour to 6,000 beneficiaries in Sepai District of (Shahristan), Uruzgan Province.

Village Development Committees with assistance from UNOPS are building a primary school in Yakawlang and a veterinary clinic in Nayak District of Bamyan.

FAO Livestock opened a new Field Office in Yakawlang District of Bamyan.

Eastern Region

UNICEF distributed supplies to Mehterlam Hospital and MCH centres in Laghman Province.

Two female monitors visited UNICEF projects in Qarghai and Surkhrud Districts of Nangrahar, participated in the ORT/HES campaign, and monitored household level activities.

A joint monitoring and supervision by UNICEF, WHO, MoPH and concerned NGOs took place in all areas of the eastern region, except Kunar Province, because of security concerns.

Northern Region

Following identification of basic needs by many village development committees, the Arghanchkha Cluster Village Development Committee with the assistance of UNOPS undertook construction of a rural health

clinic in Faizabad District of Badakhshan Province.

Southern Region

UNOPS has undertaken, through Rehabilitation of Professional Schools in Afghanistan (RPSA), the training of 24 semi-skilled workers in masonry in Dand District, Kandahar Province.

Western Region

FAO Crops distributed three tonnes of mung beans in Herat and procured 42 tonnes wheat under a food-for-seed project.

UNHCR completed construction of a causeway in Zindajan with community and RRD contributions.

WFP distributed 407 tonnes of food in conjunction with the shelter project in Farah, 145 tonnes for the school project in IDP camps and 2 tonnes for the solid waste operation in Herat City.

WHO, UNICEF, MoPH and relevant NGOs carried out a five day ORT sanitation and hygiene campaign. In addition they provided supplies to hospitals in Herat and Badghis provinces.

UNOPS/ARRP completed a market survey and feasibility study of silk production in five villages in Herat.