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Dear Friends and Partners of Shelter Now,

Greetings from Pakistan.

I'm writing this report while sitting in our office in Peshawar in temperatures of 42° Celsius (108°F). The air is humid, so the temperature actually feels even higher. Fortunately we do have air conditioning in some of the rooms here, although sadly not in this one..!

Nevertheless we are still a hundred times better off than the 3.5 million people who have had to flee the fighting between Pakistani government forces and Islamist extremists in this region. Many of them have ended up in tent camps with the most basic of supplies. I have visited a number of these camps. You can read my report on the "IDPs" inside.

I arrived here just a few days ago from Afghanistan. There I had a very pleasant surprise. This trip has been a rollercoaster of emotions for me – from sadness to shock, disbelief and joyful celebration. Like the whole of life compressed into four weeks. Read more inside.

Come with me as we journey through Pakistan and Afghanistan!

Best regards,

Ihr Udo Stolte



A little girl at the IDP camp coming for the daily handout of drinking water

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SHELTER-Report

Shelter Now's Udo Stolte has been visiting our projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan. While he was traveling, he sent us the following text:

Internally Displaced People in Pakistan

I had already heard back in Germany about the IDPs in northern Pakistan. But I wanted to be able to assess the situation for myself and sought to gain access to the camps. The general security situation in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan is very bad.

Bombs explode on an almost daily basis in Peshawar and other major cities. So, I was first careful to inquire very specifically if it was at all possible to visit the camps. I was then able to go and see two different camps, accompanied by two of our Pakistani workers.

Forced to leave everything – yet again

Some 2.5 million people have fled the fighting between the Pakistani army and the extremists. Many of them are now living in camps, cooped up in tents far away from home.

Our first port of call was the “Jalozai Camp”. The Pakistani army is providing protection for the IDPs – and on this day, for us too. The camp appears to be well organized. In addition to the army, the relevant UN organizations are also involved in the work. The IDPs are receiving food, drinking water and have the necessary facilities to survive. But the heat is a problem. It's May 23rd, the air is humid and it's 42 degrees Celsius (108°F) in the shade – except there is no shade here. The people are in tents or outside in the open air.

We ask how we can help. “Water coolers, fans, shelters for shade,” they reply. We have built simple shelters for shade in refugee camps in the past. We could do the same here. There are around 100,000 people in the camp, with more arriving every day.

We leave Jalozai and move on to the “Benazir Camp”, a small facility with around 400 families (2500 people). As we arrive they are receiving fresh drinking water from an incoming truck. “We only started getting drinking water three days ago,” they say. Others tell us they've been waiting for weeks for their food rations. These people have been here since last September, when fighting broke out in their home district of Bajour near the Afghan border. The area is now allegedly “clean” – or free of terrorists. So the people can return home. “But how can we go back?” they call out. “Our homes and our businesses have been destroyed!” I feel helpless and have no answer for them. “Many children will die this summer,” one man tells me emphatically.

In this area, summer temperatures go up to 50 degrees





Celsius (122°F) with a high level of humidity.

But most of the IDPs – around 80 percent – are not living in the camps; they have been put by relatives or friends instead. At least that means they have a roof over their heads. But we do not yet know what conditions they are living in. Presumably many houses designed for two families are now suddenly accommodating eight families. We want to find out what help they need. It's a major challenge for us, and we will need financial support.

We've inherited a school!

On Sunday, May 24th, I fly from Peshawar to Kabul. My feet have barely touched the ground when I'm whisked off by some of our staff. We drive straight to a primary school, where I find teachers and students all dressed up and waiting eagerly for the "cameraman" from Germany to arrive. They are celebrating "Teachers' Day". Throughout Afghanistan, students in all schools honor their teachers on

this day, and thank them for the strenuous and often dangerous job that they do. I think we should import this custom to Germany. In several areas the Afghans are ahead of us, and we could learn a lot from them.

Walking into the school playground, we receive a respectful but very warm welcome from the students and teachers. The pupils are throwing glitter around – my camera is soon full of it too. On the terrace, the students perform songs and recite poems, they act out a sketch and receive hearty applause. Presents are given out. The celebrations continue in the staff room, with the school director feeding her colleagues cake – a ritual expressing honor and deep respect. Afterwards the whole thing is reversed and the teachers feed the director. Then cakes are carried out by the kilo into the classrooms and distributed to the children. There's a lively party atmosphere in the classrooms, with modern Afghan music coming from loudspeakers and the children dancing along.

A few days later, we return to the school. Everyday life has



Teachers' Day



Daily life at our new school in Kabul

IDP – Internally Displaced Persons

For months, the Pakistani army has been battling extremists in the northern areas close to Afghanistan. The military operations have been stepped up considerably in recent months. This has forced local residents to flee to safer areas. Working with the UN, the Pakistani government has set up camps where the IDPs can find refuge and wait out the fighting. As soon as an area is pronounced "clean", i.e. free of terrorists, the IDPs are supposed to return home. This is not always easy, however, as their villages, businesses and houses have frequently been destroyed in the fighting. Banks have been plundered, and everything of value is gone.



now resumed, but the same polite and cheerful atmosphere remains. If a child gets something right while out at the front, everyone applauds. It's fun being here and I find I'm reluctant to leave. Being a teacher is the best job there is. During the break, the children play together energetically – and there are no arguments! There are children from different ethnic groups here – Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Uzbeks and perhaps others. But the school is a picture of peace – an example to the adults in this country, and around the world. There are a good 60 girls and 40 boys. These children really stole my heart away!

Classes are taught in two sittings during the mornings. In the afternoons there are then English and computer courses. Those who want to, can also learn how to make carpets.

Shelter Now took over this school a few months ago from another organization that was unable to continue the work. The school needs painting and they wanted a slide for the playground, so I took money with me to cover those costs. Otherwise it costs us around 1000 euros a month to keep the school running. So if you would like to, you can sponsor a child for 10 euros a month.

An exciting project! (Project no. 10607)

Back in Pakistan

After my trip to Afghanistan I am now back in Pakistan. The IDP situation has deteriorated considerably since I left. There are now more than 3.6 million people who have had to flee their homes. 3,679,394! And more are leaving every day.

I was originally planning to take photos and videos of our newly built schools in the earthquake zone in northern Pakistan. But the children are not being taught at the moment because the schools are full of IDPs. It is in any case now forbidden for foreigners to enter the school because members of the Taliban have infiltrated the IDPs and there have been repeated attacks. The security situation has deteriorated even further here. Pakistan is currently considered the most dangerous country in the world.



Finally a little shade...

But perhaps there will still be an opportunity to capture the situation in pictures.

As we have very few ex-pats in our Pakistan team at the moment (and those that remain are busy building the last four schools in the earthquake zone) we are considering joining forces with Pakistani organizations to help the IDPs. I am currently involved in talks. I will know more in a few days.

Tuesday, June 9th, around 10:55pm – I am just making a few corrections to our latest press release when there is a loud bang outside. I know immediately it's a bomb. It sounded pretty close. A short while later I'm informed that the Pearl Continental Hotel – the most prominent and best guarded hotel in Peshawar – was the target of the attack. The next morning I read in the newspaper: "500 kg of explosives, 15 dead, over 70 wounded". Another cold statistic to add to the many. We are in a war here.

Still we continue our work. We will not allow ourselves to be discouraged – that would mean that terror had won. Evil may prevail for a time, but not for ever.

Best regards from Udo Stolte
and the Shelter Team

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