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Dear Friends and Partners of Shelter Now

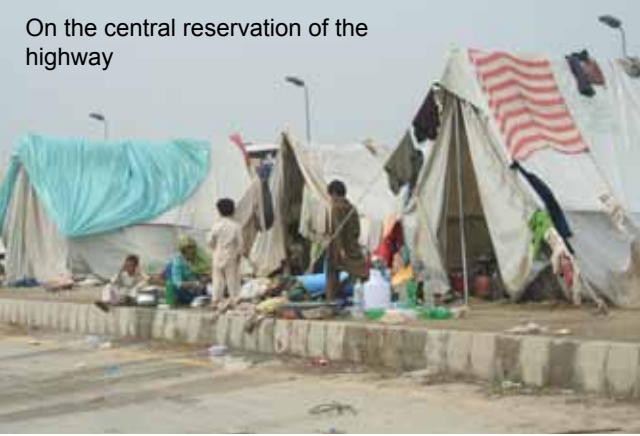
The devastating floods in Pakistan have already largely disappeared again from our media. The times we live in are fast moving. However, we continue to focus on those suffering from the effects of the flood disaster. We are endeavoring to help them effectively with all the means at our disposal. Udo Stolte reports here on his visit to Pakistan, and also on what we can do now and in the future for those affected.

It will take years before life can return to "normal".

Thank you so much for your support
Udo Stolte and the Shelter Team




On the central reservation of the highway



SHELTER Report

Udo Stolte reports:

Pakistan awash

The village was still submerged in water. The local inhabitants took me to their houses. I waded through the water and entered one of the homes. The house itself was still standing, but that was it – all furniture and other household goods lay strewn across the floor of the rooms, covered with mud. We climbed the stairs –everything was slippery- on the upper floor the scene was the same. Then a boy showed me flood markings on the walls: the water had stood at about one meter high on the top floor! The father explained, “When the flood came we could no longer leave the house, we went upstairs, the water rose ever higher until finally the only way to save ourselves was to get onto the roof. We remained there for several days.” All blankets, mattresses and other items now lay spread out on the roof to dry. This was only the second day without rain. Villagers were desperately trying to remove the muck and mold from their belongings - an impossible task. They were simply glad to have escaped with their lives.

I was deeply moved by the tragic situation these people find themselves in.

A few days previous to this, I had decided to visit the flood areas in North West Pakistan. Our national director was not in the country when the flood struck and was unable to get back quickly, so I flew to Pakistan myself.

Our project manager picked me up at Islamabad airport and we took the highway directly to Peshawar. On all sides: flood water everywhere as far as the eye could see. The road had also been under water, but was dry again, as it stood about two meters higher than surrounding terrain. People from the villages all around had sought refuge here, and were living by the roadside with their surviving animals. They had even put up tents or plastic sheeting as homes on the central reservation of the highway. I could hardly believe my eyes.

The first food distributions

In Peshawar we drove straight to a restaurant, not to have lunch, but to load our mini truck with food rations. Since midnight, the chefs had been busy preparing around 2000 portions of “Kabuli Palau”, a simple rice meal with raisins, nuts and carrots, packed in plastic bags and kept hot. We then transported these meals to the flooded villages for distribution.

Hardly had we arrived when the children, followed by the men, came running to get hold of something to eat. It was certainly not easy to get them into any semblance of a queue; they were starving and simply grabbed the plastic bags with the rice.

As we drove on we distributed our food to hungry refugees at the roadside, who were constantly waving us down. When I asked one family about their experience, a young girl told us, “Our home was washed away by the flood; one of our sisters died; my father’s business is destroyed; our school lies in ruins. We just don’t know what to do any more.” The next day we found this same family again at the same spot. They embraced us just like old friends. In spite of everything they felt that they had not been abandoned.

A few hundred meters further on, a man waved us down and said



Only now is the extent of the damage becoming clear



The second phase of the emergency aid begins



Hope for Afghanistan and Pakistan

simply, "I don't want to get anything from you, but I do have a request: please take a look at our village!" We got out of the vehicle to see and again found ourselves beside an area of water. The village was no longer there. The man who spoke to us was one of the village elders. We wanted to hand out food, so he called his people together; the men and children formed themselves into an orderly queue next to our mini truck. They were Pashtuns, who for the most part lived very traditionally. Their wives were waiting there among the ruins on



the other side of the flood water, where up to a few days before their village had stood. We asked each one how many family members they had and then gave them the corresponding number of food portions. Two men said that they also wanted to take food for some widows and their children. Deeply moved, we continued our journey. Every day was like this. Meanwhile we are able to distribute 4,300 portions on a daily basis.

The heat was extreme, the humidity oppressive. Every now and again we spotted a Pakistani army tanker containing drinking water for the victims. Otherwise they drank the untreated water around them. Sickness and epidemics are a constant threat. The German branch of the "International Water Aid Organization" (IWAQ) had kindly donated us 43,000 water purification tablets which the Germany Government transported to Pakistan free of charge. Each family gets 200 of these tablets as well as a water cooling container. One tablet is enough to disinfect 10 liters of water.

Generous donations from Germany

After an extremely strenuous week of emergency relief work in Pakistan I returned to Germany, where various media outlets immediately approached me for interviews. Radio, television and newspapers wanted first hand reports on the disaster. I was more than happy to comply. Such interviews provide an opportunity to inform many in Germany about the true state of affairs in Pakistan, and above all, to present ways we can assist in the relief effort, as long as we get sufficient funds.

The response of many in Germany has been impressive. Quite a number have made donations, some very generously. Churches have collected money and sent it to us; sizable sums have also come from firms, the Baptist Union and OJC, a Christian youth organization. All this support is enabling us to expand our projects in Pakistan. We are now entering phase two of our assistance plan for the flood victims.

Helping others to help themselves

Disaster relief has several development phases: The initial concern is to save lives; in this case by providing drinking water, hot meals and medical care for all those affected. As early as possible though, we want to enable them to prepare their own food. We are now purchasing kitchen utensils such as simple gas cookers, pots; plates etc. at the local markets and giving them to the families. In addition they are receiving beds, mattresses and blankets – all items destroyed by the floods. When the victims are, at least in part, able to manage their own lives again, a sense of human dignity is restored. As far as possible our aim is to sustain 2000 families, which means caring for between 10,000 and 15,000 persons. Further projects are planned. The flood victims have also lost their houses. Even in Pakistan the winters are unpleasantly cold and often wet and windy. The UN may distribute tents. Housing reconstruction will certainly have to wait a few years. Maybe we can be of assistance during that phase. As you know, we have been involved in house construction projects in Afghanistan and Pakistan for many years now. The final phase is to bring the flood victims to the point where they can secure their own livelihood again. We are already considering the best way to do this. Meanwhile we have established good relations to a number of village communities. We can plan the future together.

Not even clothes to wear

Back to the present: most refugees were unable to salvage anything except the clothes they were wearing. These items of clothing are now fully worn out. More and more children are seen running around naked, others hide themselves in shame. We really need to do something. Currently we are engaging local women to sew clothes and then pass them on to those in need. These women are paid for their work and in this way some have even been able to establish a new livelihood. We are considering other similar measures that will enable men and women to be significantly involved in the reconstruction of their destroyed villages. One thing is sure: there is still much to do. This is a disaster of unimaginable dimensions. It will take years before the flood victims can enjoy a decent existence again.

We would like to express our thanks to all of you who have supported our projects financially, especially on behalf of the flood victims.

“Our” projects are your projects as well.

Kindest regards,
Udo Stolte and the Shelter Team

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