

PAKISTAN: FLOODS

23 March 1998

appeal no. 08/98

situation report no. 01

period covered: 13 March - 23 March 1998

At least 40,000 people have been left homeless by the floods in Baluchistan. Damage assessment has begun and distributions of essential relief items to victims are under way, despite transport and communications difficulties. The region could find itself facing a worse disaster later this year if, as anticipated, the flood season is particularly bad and the next harvest is poor or non-existent .

The context

From 3 March onwards rain falling in Iran and the foothills north of the Kech Valley in Baluchistan, Pakistan, poured into the Kech and Nihing rivers, causing severe flooding where the two combine to become the Dasht river. The floodwaters covered entire river valleys, washing away houses, structures, irrigation systems and most crops in their path.

More than 300 bodies have been recovered so far but recovery of other bodies buried in sand, mud, and debris downstream may be impossible. Approximately 6,000 houses were washed away and over 1,500 tubewells badly damaged in the affected area of Makran division. Some 40,000 people have been left homeless and local reports suggest that up to another 40,000 have moved from the area, since many are fearful of further flooding.

Makran is only accessible via flights to Turbat. Even under normal conditions, the region is 24 hours away from Karachi by road (and 800 km. from the nearest Red Crescent Branch in Quetta).

Latest events

Communications are still disrupted, hampering relief work and rehabilitation in the affected area. Crops have been totally washed away. In addition the food stocks of individual households and in official go-downs were spoiled or swept away. Although emergency distributions of packed food items have provided temporary relief, it is anticipated that a latent emergency will exist until the end of this year.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Pakistan Red Crescent Society •

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has distributed tents, blankets, medicine, and food to several thousand people. Procurement is underway for other urgently needed relief supplies which can be obtained within Pakistan.

Since PRCS does not have a branch in this remote area, staff from the Karachi branch and Islamabad are involved in assessment, and procurement and distribution of aid. Several of these staff have participated in Federation supported disaster preparedness training as part of the PRCS Disaster Preparedness Programme and the knowledge they acquired is being put to use in this relief operation.

International Federation •

CHF 150,000 from DREF was allocated for emergency procurement. A Federation Finance Delegate is providing technical support to the PRCS, and will continue to assist in gathering information. Funds are transferred to the PRCS on a working advance basis and will be reported upon in accordance with Federation procedures. A Federation Logistician is providing technical support in procurement and distribution planning. The South Asia Regional Delegation will facilitate the disaster preparedness and relief response training workshops foreseen in the Appeal, as well as provide ongoing support to the PRCS. All will participate in monitoring this operation.

Outstanding needs

In addition to the food shortages facing at least 40,000 people, waterborne and vector carried diseases are on the increase, pointing to the need to re-establish sources of safe drinking water. Food supplements may also be required to overcome nutrition problems in children.

People will require seeds, agricultural tools, and fertiliser to grow their next crop and become self-sufficient again. They will also need help to reconstruct disabled irrigation channels. The government will have to repair the damaged bunds (embankments) to prevent damage to the fields in the coming monsoon season beginning in June. The real emergency may therefore occur later this year, if there is a low or non-existent harvest.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Damage assessment is proving as difficult as the distribution of relief goods in this remote area. An appraisal of the damage and the ensuing needs for resettlement of the displaced population is being prepared by the civil and military administration in order to mobilise available resources and set priorities for further aid. The provincial government estimated it immediately needs approximately Rs. 70 million for the resettlement of uprooted people.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

If the anticipated weather systems develop, this could be the start of a very bad flooding season for Pakistan. The rural people of Baluchistan desperately need help to regain their self-sufficiency. Other organisations are not known to be working in the area, putting an even greater onus on the PRCS to assist the victims. Cash contributions are urgently needed to continue this operation.

Ann Naef
Acting Head
Appeals & Reports Service

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department