# *PAKISTAN: DROUGHT*

***7 April 2000***

### *Information Bulletin N° 1*

## *The Disaster*

The province of Baluchistan in the remote south-western region of Pakistan is experiencing a rapidly worsening drought which is affecting over 100,000 people. It has been caused by poor rainfall over the past three years and an almost total lack of rainfall during the recent winter.

The terrain of the drought stricken areas is arid plateau, flanked by ranges of barren hills. Those worst affected are semi-nomadic Baluch pastoralists, scattered across remote mountain valleys in small cluster villages. They depend for their livelihood on their livestock which includes sheep, goats and camels. The lack of rains means that local water sources are drying up and there is very little vegetation for grazing. This has led to heavy livestock losses, ranging between 20 and 80% in some areas.

Mortality rates among the population are rising, particularly among the elderly and vulnerable. The general health of the population is declining, with rising levels of malnutrition due to the poor diet on which many people are subsisting.

Traditionally, people and animals share the same water sources, either wells or natural springs. As these water sources begin to dry up the risk of diseases spreading through contamination increases.

The economic impact of the drought has been severe. Market prices for livestock have plummeted and in lower-lying areas where cultivation is practised many people have not sown the main annual wheat crop because of the lack of rains. To compound the situation there is a shortage of wheat flour in the local markets, which is now rationed. As the economic status of these communities continues to decline, many people will invariably be caught up in a cycle of debt in order to feed their families. Although the government has intimated that communities in the worst affected areas may have to be relocated to lower lying regions, most people are reluctant to leave their ancestral lands. The next substantial rains are not due until October

The coming months will be critical. If there are no rains to replenish vegetation, livestock losses will increase, leaving the population in a precarious situation. To date, the government, local political parties and NGOs have provided some food, and medical and veterinary assistance which has been limited to Aranji sub district. The government recently warned of a worsening drought in other areas, including the north-western district of Chagai, and the north-eastern districts of Zhob and Loralai. However, no comprehensive assessments have yet been undertaken. Reports are also emerging of drought in the Cholistan region of neighbouring Punjab province and in southern Afghanistan.

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## *Red Cross/Red Crescent Action*

The Baluchistan branch of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has established good relations with the local government, tribal structures and NGOs in the drought affected areas. The branch has been monitoring the drought closely and has carried out some initial vulnerability assessments in the south east district of Khudzar, in particular Arangi sub district, and in Kharan district in the south west. In March, a joint Federation / PRCS assessment team visited the same areas in order to further clarify the situation.

## *Needs*

Immediate financial support, totaling CHF 110,000, is sought in order to begin a limited relief programme based on the initial PRCS /Federation assessment findings in the districts of Khuzdar and Kharan (see budget below). This programme aims to provide food assistance and animal fodder to approximately 2,000 families in these districts for an initial period of three weeks. Relief supplies will be procured locally and distributed through tribal structures enabling people to remain within their communities. Further monitoring and assessments of the situation are required before a more extensive relief operation can be considered.

With water supplies becoming rapidly depleted and an increased risk of contamination becoming more likely, there is a clear need for a water and sanitation programme that would enable water sources to be used more effectively and increase the supply of potable water. Health education would be an integral aspect to this programme as there is little health and hygiene awareness amongst the nomadic population.

Access to health services for the more remote communities remains severely limited. Strategically located health posts need to be established in the affected areas, staffed by male and female doctors who would operate an outreach service through mobile clinics into the affected areas, providing basic curative services and health education.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia and Pacific Department

**Budget Baluchistan Drought**

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**Budget Baluchistan Drought**

| | Quantity<br><br>Kg/ ltr | Total Costs for<br>2,000 families per week | Total Costs for<br><br>3 weeks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Flour | 12 | 7,272.73 | 21,820.00 |
| Rice | 4 | 4,363.64 | 13,090.00 |
| Lentils | 2 | 3,636.36 | 10,910.00 |
| Cooking Oil | 2 | 9,696.97 | 29,090.00 |
| Salt | 1 | 545.45 | 1,640.00 |
| Barley/ Husk | | | 3,050.00 |
| Transport Costs | | | 2,500.00 |
| Locally Recruited Staff | | | 2,500.00 |
| Delegate's Costs (1) | | | 10,000.00 |
| Admin Costs | | | 3,300.00 |
| PSB | | | 12,100.00 |
| | | | |
| **TOTAL (CHF)** | | | **110,000.00** |
| | | | |

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