

# Alert

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**Pakistan – No. 15/2010**

## **Hunza Valley dam burst and flashfloods threat - ACT mobilizes response**

**Geneva, 27 May 2010**

### **Description of the emergency**

**ACT member Church World Service- Pakistan/Afghanistan** reports that the lives of thousands of families in northern Pakistan are facing acute danger as an artificial dam created by landslides earlier this year threatens to breach its banks and create massive flash floods. More than 14,072 displaced persons have already been registered, while 25,000 have been evacuated as a precautionary measure from areas at risk. reports that vulnerable families are being moved with only basic household items, livestock and food stock which will be sufficient for only two or three days.

In January 2010, a series of landslides in the Hunza valley in the mountainous Gilgit Baltistan province resulted in two villages falling into the Hunza River, the blocking of the river and the creation of an artificial dam. The Pakistan Army's Frontier Works Organisation has built a spillway to prevent the dam being breached. However, the water level is continuing to rise rapidly at a rate of 2.8 feet per day. The length of the dam's area has extended from 3km to 18.5km. The dam is forecast to overflow on the 27-28<sup>th</sup> May, and may lead to flash floods up to a distance of 400 km downriver. The scale of the impact of this disaster will be dependent on the water speed and wave height.

Vulnerable areas identified by the local authorities include Allai Tehsil in Battagram Distric, Kala Dhaka Tehsil in Mansehra, Besham and Martung Tehsils in Shangla, and 30 villages in Kohistan. 18 camps for displaced persons have been set up, including in official buildings and schools, and up to a month's supply of food rations have been stockpiled. Some are choosing to stay with relatives.

While the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s mobilisation of a relief response and donor pledges are strong for Hunza and Gilgit districts, substantially greater gaps in assistance will need to be met in Kohistan and Shangla. This includes tents, gas stoves and cylinders, bedding materials, and food packages. There is also an acute need for doctors, ambulances, medicines and medical supplies across all of the areas.

### **National and international response**

#### *National and Local Government*

The Government has relocated most of the vulnerable families to temporary camps. At risk communities have been generally cooperative with the government's evacuation plan. In However, there are still a significant number of residents who are reluctant to leave and move into the camps, so community leaders have received orders to vacate houses by force if required.

The army and federal government have readied seven helicopters for immediate evacuation needs. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority has completed an emergency evacuation plan. Using available resources, a relief camp and different information centers have been established and warning sirens installed in different locations. Wheat depots have also been established at different places with army personnel manning them.

The federal government has so far provided Rs100 million and another Rs700 million have been allocated as special development fund for the affected areas. The Sindh government has also extended financial support worth Rs7 million for the affected people. The National Disaster Management Authority is currently coordinating all donations and contributions from different agencies and NGOs and supervises distribution.

#### *International and National NGOs*

In response to the crisis and in preparation for the potential massive evacuation and relocation of residents, several international and national NGOs and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society have prepared contingency plans and commenced with initial activities to be able to provide immediate and adequate assistance. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has started transporting critical relief supplies to Hunza.

#### **ACT Alliance preparedness and response**

In consultation with fellow members of the ACT Pakistan Forum, ACT member Church World Service- Pakistan/Afghanistan's Emergency Response Team is on stand-by for deployment as soon as the lake breaches and available relief supplies have been assessed. CWS's Health Team in Swat and other local partners in the area have also been alerted and mobilised.

CWS-P/A is planning to focus on meeting the substantially greater gaps in assistance identified in the Kohistan and Shangla districts, likely related to the difficult terrain and access to these areas. Initial indications from CWS P/A are that they are planning to provide around 500 shelter kits which can be quickly procured and would have a great impact in assisting displaced families, dependent upon available funding.

The ACT Secretariat expects to receive a request for ACT Rapid Response Funding of up to US \$60,000 from CWS-P/A on May 27<sup>th</sup>.

CWS-P/A is also partnering with Sungi Development Foundation and Save the Children Federation Inc. under an ongoing recovery and development programme of the Allai Valley, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands (EKN). The three partners have received a pledge of emergency and rehabilitation support for 1,000 families in Allai from EKN in relation to this programme. It has been agreed that CWS-P/A will distribute non-food relief items and 7-days food rations as part of the joint response to this disaster, in coordination with the District Coordination Cell.

**Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jessie Kgoroadira, ACT Chief Finance Officer ([jkg@actalliance.org](mailto:jkg@actalliance.org)).**

**Thank you for your attention.**

#### **For further information please contact:**

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