Tajikistan: Flash Floods displace Thousands and trigger $5.3 million humanitarian Appeal

The Government of Tajikistan in collaboration with the humanitarian community in the country launched an appeal 19 May for US$5.3 million to provide relief and recovery assistance to thousands of people affected by flash floods that hit Kulyab and surrounding districts in the south of Tajikistan on 7 May.

Forty people were killed, 33 went missing and at least 85 were severely injured by the floods. About 4,500 people in Kulyab were displaced as their houses were destroyed or severely damaged by torrents of water, stones and debris. Another 16,000 people in rural areas lost their livelihoods; their livestock was killed, crops were destroyed and pastures were buried under mud and rocks.

In the aftermath of the crisis, the Government of Tajikistan and aid agencies successfully delivered life-saving assistance to 4,500 displaced people who were accommodated in tent camps. The aid included tents, food, drinking water and emergency healthcare. However, the displaced in the tent camps need further life-sustaining support for up to 6 months, while the affected people in rural areas need help to restore their livelihoods.

The appeal includes 26 projects proposed by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. The projects aim to provide food and basic social services to the Kulyab tent camp residents, restore animal stocks and agricultural land in the surrounding districts, and provide basic household items to flood survivors. The restoration of safe drinking water and sanitation in the town of Kulyab and in seven districts is also in the appeal.

See background on [www.ocha.kz](http://www.ocha.kz)
See Tajikistan on [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

Omani Preparedness pays off against tropical Storm Phet

Tropical storm Phet made landfall on the eastern coast of the Sultanate of Oman late Friday 4 June. Reports indicate that 16 people are dead or missing and infrastructure like electricity, roads and communications networks has been damaged.

The Omani Charity Organisation has begun distributing aid to storm-hit areas including Muscat, Dhakhiya and Dhahirah. A convoy of 22 trucks loaded with 780 tons of food as well as a large quantity of drinking water has been sent to the affected areas, but an estimate of the total number of people in need of assistance was not available. Some 60,000 residents, mostly from Masirah Island, were reportedly evacuated.
Urgent Assistance needed to mitigate Crop Failure and Livestock Loss in Syria

Before the storm, which began as a cyclone but was downgraded before it hit Oman, the Royal Omani Police advised people to stay home as a precautionary measure. Hour by hour weather forecasts were also made publicly available.

In 2007, Oman was hit by Cyclone Gonu which tore through the country killing at least 49 people and caused damage estimated at US$3.9 billion. As result, the Royal Omani Police established a directorate of National Civil Defence (NCD). Before Phet made landfall, NCD issued warnings to the local population along the coast and to fishing communities.

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator sharply condemns fatal Aid Flotilla Raid

At least nine people of Turkish nationality were killed 31 May after Israeli soldiers boarded a flotilla of ships carrying 10,000 tonnes of aid to the Gaza Strip, in defiance of the Israeli blockade. There was widespread condemnation of the violence, with several countries summoning the Israeli ambassadors serving there. The incident was also condemned by the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General who called for a full investigation.

John Holmes, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, issued a strong statement saying that such an incident should never have happened or needed to happen.

“The blockade of Gaza by Israel has been unacceptable, unnecessary and counterproductive from its beginning in 2007. It has worsened conditions of life for one and a half million Palestinians, deepened poverty and food insecurity, prevented reconstruction, and increased aid dependence by destroying livelihoods and economic activity. It has helped only the extremists”, read the statement.

Immediately following the incident, Egypt opened the Rafah crossing to Gaza and Gazans have been streaming through the border to Egypt since. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has said that the crossing will be open "indefinitely" as a humanitarian gesture.

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Humanitarian assistance has reached drought-affected communities in Syria, but the Syria Drought Response Plan remains underfunded at less than 30 percent. Photo: OCHA

In parts of Syria, following three years of drought associated with climate change, farmers have lost all their crops in 2010 and, affecting their ability to mitigate the situation, lost their credibility to lend money to buy seeds for the next cropping season. Herders in the affected areas, who lost their livestock during the previous droughts, are also severely affected and do not have the capacity to rebuild their herds.

This is the preliminary conclusion of a Pre-Harvest Assessment Mission to the drought-stricken areas in Syria carried out from 26 May to 1 June. The mission was led by FAO and included the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and UN humanitarian agencies. The mission visited several governorates to compare the agricultural production this year with previous years and the impact on the national production.

According to recommendations of the assessment mission, assistance should be delivered to the affected population quickly to avoid further depletion of their assets and to reduce the level of migration. Emergency food aid is also vital to prevent further deterioration in the food security situation of affected households.

The Syria Drought Response Plan, a joint Government-UN humanitarian appeal, is funded at less than 30 percent of the $45 million required.
Iran hit by Series of Floods

A series of floods in Iran affected over 60 villages, led to two fatalities and caused at least US$5 million worth of damages during May. The most serious incident happened on 21 May, when floods left two people dead and six missing around Mashhad in Khorasan Razavi province in north-eastern Iran. In response to the flooding, relief and rescue teams from Iranian Red Crescent Society deployed to the area and rescued more than 160 people.

Global Health Cluster Members on Mission in Yemen

Members of the Global Health Cluster carried out a joint mission to Yemen - where an ongoing humanitarian crisis is superimposed on a situation of severe, chronic underdevelopment - during the first week of May 2010. The aim was to develop recommendations for improved humanitarian response in the health sector and promote the implementation of the cluster approach, as well as to provide stakeholders with information on the products and services available from the Global Health Cluster.

Yemen is ranked 104 out of 182 in the 2009 Human Development Index and approximately 41 percent of the population live below the poverty line. In 2006, only half of the population had access to health services. In rural areas, where 70 percent of the population lives, only one in four had access to essential services.

Several rounds of fighting between the Government and armed groups in the north of the country since 2004 have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians concentrated in and around three IDP camps. Access to health services has further declined in the affected areas. In addition, widespread malnutrition and food insecurity compound the health needs.

The joint mission conducted a workshop in the capital Sana’a and two team members went to Harad, where thousands are internally displaced due to fighting. In terms of key health interventions recommended for up-scaling, the mission identified reproductive health as a priority area. A comprehensive coverage of primary health care services to the affected population including a functioning referral system is also a priority.

Other recommendations include a call for multi-sector assessments in areas where there is no adequate data available for response planning; re-prioritization of health interventions for the upcoming revision of the Consolidated Appeal (Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan); and ensure a close link between humanitarian health activities and longer term support to the health system. This should be done through capacity building of both Government officials and non-governmental organizations.

The mission team comprised UNICEF, UNFPA, Marie Stopes International, the Global Health Cluster Secretariat and the World Health Organization (WHO), which is the humanitarian lead agency for health in Yemen.

See OCHA Yemen [http://ochaonline.un.org/yemen]
Lebanon: Preventing a Humanitarian Crisis in the North

The situation for some 27,000 former residents of the Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp (NBC) in Lebanon, which was destroyed in fighting between the Lebanese army and Islamic militants in 2007, continues to be fragile. Unemployment remains high and the local economy has not recovered due to the restrictions on movement in and out of the area surrounding the camp, where many of the displaced refugees are temporarily living. The refugees continue to be highly dependent on assistance from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which for the moment is ensuring that families do not slide into deeper poverty.

Since 2008, UNRWA has provided rental cash subsidies to all families forced to rent temporary accommodation, and this commitment amounts to US$600,000 each month. In addition, over 4,000 NBC families receive monthly food parcels equivalent of 800 calories per person per day as a dietary supplement. This enables families to use their limited cash to purchase fresh food and other essential commodities.

The cost of three years of displacement can be seen in the poor health status of the population and a higher rate of post-traumatic stress and chronic diseases. In order to ensure that no NBC refugee is excluded from receiving medical care, UNRWA is subsidizing 100 percent of the hospitalization and medication costs that other Palestinian refugees in Lebanon usually have to pay themselves.

UNRWA has received generous donor pledges amounting to $13.2 million, or 81 percent of the estimated budget for 2010. These funds will cover basic assistance up to September 2010. A further $3.1 million is needed for the remainder of the year and an additional $2 million will ensure operations can continue into the beginning of 2011 to help cover the gap until new funding is received for 2011.

Awareness Campaign on Risk Reduction Launched in Egypt

A change in public attitudes and public behaviour in the event of natural disasters is the main goal of a national public awareness campaign launched jointly by UNICEF and the Egyptian Cabinet’s Information and Decision Support Centre on 27 May in Cairo.

Focusing on hazards such as earthquakes, major fires and pandemics, the campaign - which will run for nine months - aims at putting risk reduction and crisis management among the priorities of Egyptian society. It also sets out to rectify wrong information about the causes and consequences of disasters. To a large extent, this will be done in collaboration with mass media, and training of journalists is part of the campaign strategy.

Other means for disseminating the advocacy messages are inclusion of risk reduction in school and university curricula, engagement with the public and non-governmental organizations and awareness training of target groups. Concrete measures in the event of a disaster include using mobile phone text messaging and telephone hotlines to provide life saving information. The campaign will employ a variety of tools and channels for communication ranging from mosques and churches to popular TV talk-shows as vehicles for dissemination of information.

Messages include a call for dealing with crises in an organized way; not to destroy public property; and how the public can assist during a crisis.

Campaign launch material stresses the goal of raising significantly the level of awareness to disaster risk reduction throughout Egyptian society. Photo: OCHA

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