



Pakistan 2010 Flood

# Against the Tide

Voices of people affected by floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Omar Asghar Khan Foundation

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## Omar Asghar Khan Foundation

Established in 1999, Omar Asghar Khan Foundation is creating opportunities for people, particularly the vulnerable, to collectively secure human and livelihood rights by strengthening their asset base and making institutions and policies pro-poor. The Foundation's field-based work is primarily based in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Its advocacy has a national focus. The Foundation has offices in Islamabad and Abbottabad.

# Against the Tide

Voices of people affected by floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



## Acknowledgements

This publication is based on the interviews of 170 women and 179 men affected by the 2010 flood in districts Charsadda, Dera Ismail Khan, and Kohistan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They presented their experiences with the flood, its impact on their lives, and defined their priorities for post-flood rehabilitation. Their contributions, interest, time, and patience are gratefully acknowledged.

The narrations were facilitated and documented by three field teams of seven women and 12 men working in each district. The field work was supported by a local collaborating organization including Pakistan International Human Rights Organization in Charsadda, Social Welfare and Environmental Development Organization in Dera Ismail Khan, and Pakistan Youth Development Organization in Kohistan. The diligence of the field teams and the support of the local collaborating organizations are duly acknowledged. Acknowledgement is also due to Ms. Beenisch Tahir for providing editing support.

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Public recommendations for government rehabilitation policies & support

## KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

An estimated 3.8 million persons were affected in the province. Over 200,000 homes were destroyed; and, an estimated 786 schools used as shelters.

### Sources:

PDMA (Situation Report 27/08/2010)  
GAUL (administrative boundaries)  
PDMA PaRRSA #30 30/09/2010  
UNOSAT/UNITAR 02/09/2010

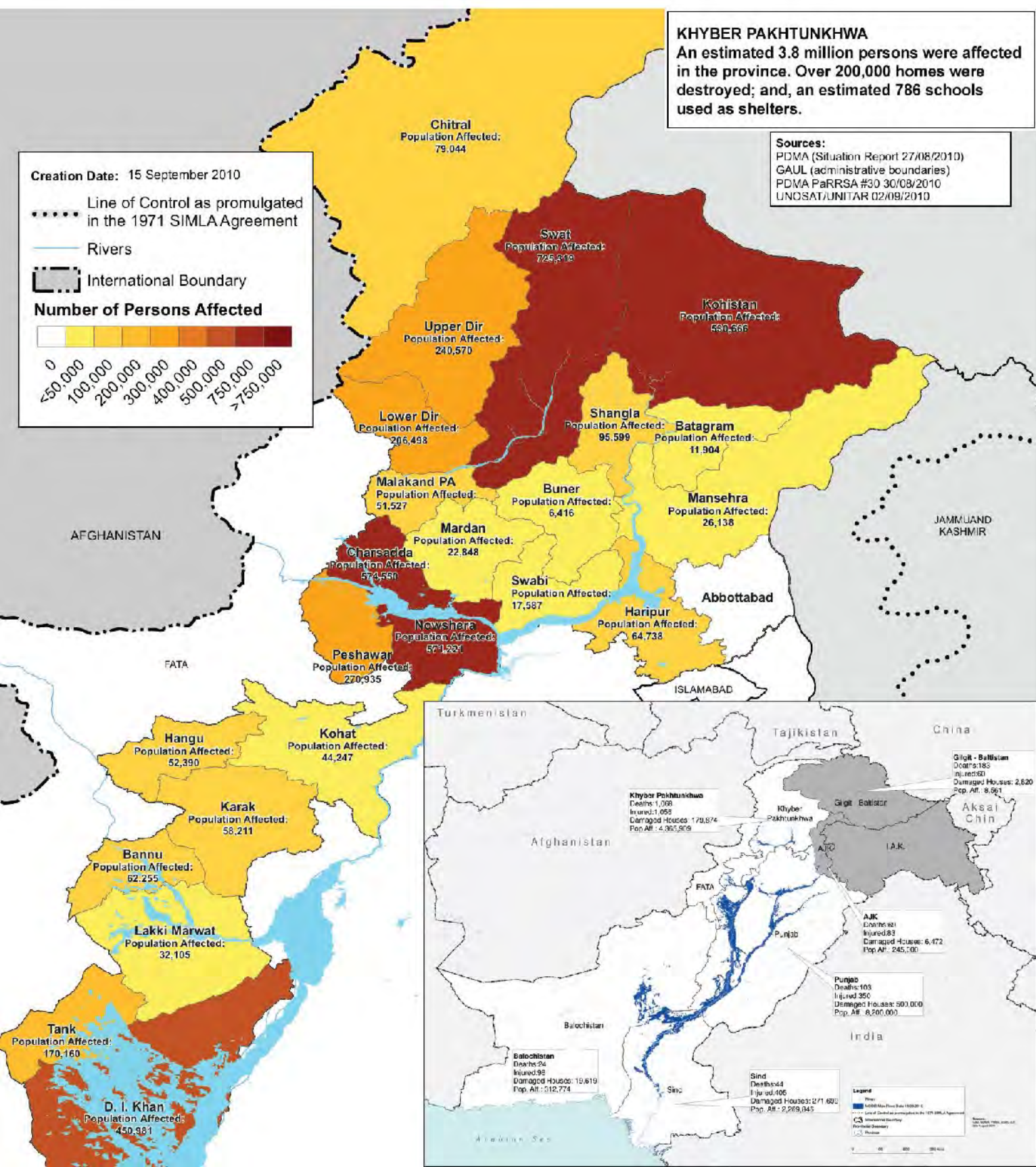
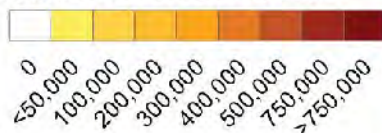
Creation Date: 15 September 2010

..... Line of Control as promulgated in the 1971 SIMLA Agreement

— Rivers

International Boundary

### Number of Persons Affected





## Introduction

The River Indus that flows from the Himalayas in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south, along the entire length of Pakistan, is a lifeline for millions. But the monsoon rains that started towards the end of July 2010 turned it into a ferocious torrent destroying everything that came in its path – lives, homes, livelihoods and dreams.

An estimated 18 million people, about one-tenth of the total population of Pakistan, are directly affected by the 2010 floods. More than 1,700 people were killed and 1.7 million homes were damaged and destroyed. 78 of the total 141 districts of Pakistan are affected, or more than half the country<sup>1</sup>.

For people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the flood was one in a series of disasters they have faced in the past five years since 2005. A devastating earthquake in 2005 killed more than 80,000, injured over 70,000, and rendered homeless an estimated four million people. The military offensive against militants in northwestern Pakistan in 2009 displaced an estimated two million people. And, now the flood in 2010 has killed more than 1,000 people, and affected nearly 200,000 homes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Coping with the disasters has been hard. As the floodwaters receded, they left fresh scars. Disappointingly, the initial government response was largely inadequate. Longer-term rehabilitation will require effective government policies and support that respond to the needs, priorities and aspirations of people affected by this natural disaster.

Towards the end of 2010 the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation sent three teams of researchers in three flood-affected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Charsadda, Dera Ismail Khan and Kohistan, that have diverse agro-ecological characteristics including plains, irrigated, arid, and, mountainous.

The teams engaged local women and men in a dialogue with a view of documenting their experiences with the disaster and their expectations of support as they pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. The dialogue was framed around three key questions:

- *What was the impact of the 2010 flood on your family, home, livelihood and community?*
- *What was your experience with relief assistance? How could it have been improved?*
- *What are your key post-flood policy priorities? Are government policies and actions responding to these priorities?*

Our team of researchers went to two union councils in each district selected on the basis of devastation caused by the flood. Ten per cent of total households in ten per cent of total villages/mohallas in each union council were selected. Interviews were conducted with a representative from each household, including 170 women and 179 men. They have not been identified in the publication to respect their privacy.

Their stories are often deeply distressing. Perhaps even more agonizing is the truth that they are mere glimpses of the human suffering inflicted by the 2010 flood across Pakistan. This publication projects the despair and the hopes of those that have endured this disaster. It also presents their policy priorities and recommendations so that effective support may help them as they rebuild their homes and lives.

<sup>1</sup> Figures quoted from Pakistan: Floods Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan, United Nations, November 2010





## Impact of the 2010 flood on people's lives

Catastrophic – seems utterly inadequate to describe the impact of the flood that was triggered by the monsoon rains of 2010 in Pakistan. More than 18 million people were affected – they lost loved ones, their homes were destroyed and their livelihoods were severely disrupted. For many the memories of the flood and the destruction it wreaked will remain with them forever.

*"Every time I close my eyes – the terrible sights of the flood are replayed in my mind and I cannot sleep. I can never forget the scene of a man falling into the river before my eyes. It will always haunt me."*

Noor Shah, Kohistan

*"People were screaming in the streets as the flood waters started rising. It was dark and there was no electricity. Each one of us was simply trying to survive. Everything we have heard about doomsday had come true for us."*

Shamim Bibi, Dera Ismail Khan



*"My young son started crying as the houses started collapsing around us. Even now he cries and is fearful that the ground will cave-in under his feet."*

Firdaus Bibi, Charsadda

Many were caught unaware. The lack of early warning systems left people unprepared to face the rising waters. Ameer Bukhsh who lives on the bank of River Jandi in Charsadda was not expecting anything unusual on the day the floodwaters entered his house, “there was no hint of rain,” he said.

We were asleep when the water entered our home. I thought someone was knocking on our door. My husband yelled: flood. I sprang to my feet, desperately scrambling together some possessions. My brother-in-law shouted that we must leave everything.....just save our lives. The water was rising rapidly. I tried to at least rescue some of my daughter’s dowry. But when I reached the chest, the floor caved-in. I ran to the other side but was soon knee-deep in mud. I was convinced that I was being punished for my ill-deeds, that I was a bad person and I would die.

Ayesha, Charsadda

Where people did receive warnings of the approaching flood through public announcements or information received from friends and relatives, some refused to believe them. Others suspected the warnings had ulterior motives.

*“When a friend in Kalam (Swat) informed us of the approaching flood, we informed others but they did not believe us. Some even alleged that we were trying to evacuate the village to rob local people. We then approached the police and got their help to evacuate people – in boats. There were no helicopters or other rescue available. We did what we could on our own.”*

Gul Khan, Charsadda





Even if warnings were received and believed, most people were able to save little. Mahvish from Charsadda said they were having breakfast when the floodwaters gushed in. "We left the food and fled. Some of us were barefoot," she said.

Flooding was not a new phenomenon in many areas. But the levels of flooding, its ferocity and destruction were not witnessed before. In Dera Ismail Khan, Hajra Bibi said that initially she was not too anxious about the flood, but now she realizes how devastating it can be. "Flooding before has never been so bad," she said.

In Kohistan, people living in high mountains expected the altitude to protect them. Many watched in disbelief as cascading waters eroded river banks, devoured homes and lands, and, submerged valleys. And yet the water levels continued to rise.

*"Our home was located high above the water. At first, people living on the banks of the river took refuge in our home. We sacrificed our goat to feed them. By the third day, the flood reached us. We too had to flee. For the first six days we found refuge in a mountain cave. Now we are living with a relative. I don't know when we will be able to return to our village or rebuild our home."*

Shamso Bibi, Kohistan



*"We were not sure what to save -- ourselves, our children or our livestock."*

Mohammad, Charsadda





Destroyed bridge on River Indus

Bridges crumbled and roads were swept away by the gushing flood waters. Entire communities were isolated and even families divided. Many spent sleepless nights, anxious about loved ones.

*"There are many individuals who are separated from their families. My neighbor was separated from her son and daughter-in-law. She is still looking for them. She has no information and is not aware whether they survived or not."*

Salman Khan, Charsadda

In Kohistan, Sikander Khan waited for three days on one side of the riverbank, wondering if his family was alive.

*"I thought my family had been swept away along with the house. I screamed and even fainted with anxiety. After what seemed like a very long time, I finally saw my brother on the other side of the river. But we could not cross it as the bridge was out."*

Sikander Khan, Kohistan

Communication links have remained cut-off for more than two years in Dera Ismail Khan, reportedly due to security concerns. This aggravated the isolation of communities as they were unable to connect with each other or with the outside world as the flood ravaged the area.

Damaged roads and bridges made markets and livelihoods inaccessible. Access to food became a major concern. Many were forced to sacrifice livestock or survive on whatever was available. Some risked their lives to get food to their families. And yet others, stayed hungry for days.

*"The local pan-chakki (water mill) was swept away by the flood. We were not able to make flour from the maize. For 11 days we ate maize boiled in water.... there was nothing else to eat. We did not even have salt to add to it."*

Haleema Bibi, Kohistan

*"For two days we went hungry. Then my husband made the terrible journey across the mountains to get food. He returned after four days. He had blisters on his feet and was sick with fever. He had paid double the market price for flour that lasted 2-3 days."*

Ayesha Bibi, Kohistan







The lack of food traumatized children. In Dera Ismail Khan a group of boys aged between 5-7 years were picking whatever crop remained in a destroyed field. When asked why they were collecting this, they said: “what will we eat when the stock at home finishes.” Such situations aggravated the agony and anxiety of parents.

Fearful of continued isolation and hunger, many made the tough decision to relocate to safer areas – leaving behind homes, livelihoods, and belongings. For many these symbols of security represented a life-time of labour. Walking away was painful. But with death literally knocking on the door, there was little choice.

*“There was no electricity supply for an entire day before the flood... so we had no idea it was approaching. When it came we had to flee on donkeys, Qinci (rickshaw) or bullock cart -- whatever we could find. Some people went to adjoining villages, others to their relatives. But there were also some that had nowhere to go..... they were just left on the roadside to fend for themselves.”*

Kashif, Dera Ismail Khan







Destroyed homes in Kohistan

Mahnaz bibi in Kohistan did not want to leave her house that her family had built with great effort. "But when I saw death facing us, I gathered some food stuff like roti, rice, tea, sugar, and other basic stuff and left our home and started climbing the mountain to get away from the rising tide. We took refuge in a cave, and shared some food. After several hours my husband and some men went back to our village to see what was happening. They returned with the news that more than half the village was destroyed," she said.

*"As the flood waters kept rising, I picked up my son and ran. When I looked back, half my house had already been swept away. I was devastated. We were living in the skies [mountains] – the flood pushed us down on the ground. For four days and four nights we went hungry – I helplessly watched my children cry with hunger."*

Noor Bibi, Kohistan

*"We had the option of staying in our homes and starving or leaving for safer places on foot – covering very difficult terrain."*

Habibullah, Kohistan





As winter set in, many surviving roads were also closed. More families decided to leave. The journey was harrowing. Shamshad Begum from Kohistan said that they walked for 40 hours to reach safety. "We used to cover the same distance in 30 minutes in a bus when there was a road," she said. Climbing mountains in the harsh cold was even more difficult for children and the elderly. They were weak and exhausted. Some did not make it.

*"The journey was very tough and the milk in my breasts had dried. I could not feed my son. He died in my arms. We buried him on the mountain."*

Insaniyat Begum, Kohistan

*"It was raining and the narrow footholds in the mountain were slippery. For a whole day we climbed the mountain by holding on to rocks. Our nails were uprooted. It was terrifying. My four children were shivering in the cold. Two fell ill – and we had to carry them as we made our way through this hazardous route. I am grateful that we are alive."*

Sadaqat Bibi, Kohistan



*"The journey in the mountains was very difficult. We got blisters on our feet. One woman fell in the river and died – we could not save her."*

Taj, Kohistan





Anxious faces

Traumatized, people were gripped with fear, confusion and anxiety. Children were among the worst affected. Many fear the sound of floodwaters, others worry about snakes and scorpions.

*"My young nephew is afraid of the flood. He eats half a roti and keeps the other half in his pocket incase another flood comes."*

Ismail Khan, Kohistan

Those displaced yearn to be reunited with friends, families and neighbours. Coping is even more difficult without these traditional support structures.



*"I don't know if we will ever see our village again. We are so far from our homes and community."*

Saadia Begum, Kohistan



Those able to return after the flood waters receded, found little had remained of their former lives. Iffat in Dera Ismail Khan said that the flood was like a cobra (snake). "It struck us and took everything away," she said. In Charsadda, the flood waters had reached as high as 15-17 feet, inundating entire villages and neighborhoods -- trampling homes, possessions and livestock. Kutcha houses of the poor had simply dissolved into the water like salt. Waseem is a ten-year old boy and lives with his nani (maternal grandmother) in Charsadda. He was saving up to buy a cycle. "The flood destroyed our home and also swept away my golak (piggy bank). I cannot buy the cycle I wanted now," he despaired.




Salvaging what is left of his home



*"When we returned to our village it seemed as if it was hit by an atom bomb. There was no sign of our house. The devastation was heart-wrenching – nothing had survived."*

Safiya Bibi, Charsadda





*"My sister was to be married three months from now I was preparing her dowry, including clothes. When I returned to my house, I almost fainted when I saw everything was destroyed."*

Raqeeb, Charsadda

The loss of family, livelihood, and a familiar way of life left people vulnerable, crushing their spirit. Many are gripped with hopelessness.

*"Like a sharp knife, the floodwaters cut into everything that came in its path. Everything in our home was buried in mud. We lost everything. The flood has completely derailed our lives, and taken us onto a totally different path."*

Shazia Khatoon, Dera Ismail Khan

*"We have experienced floods before, but nothing this devastating. I am afraid and anxious that our losses will drive my husband insane."*

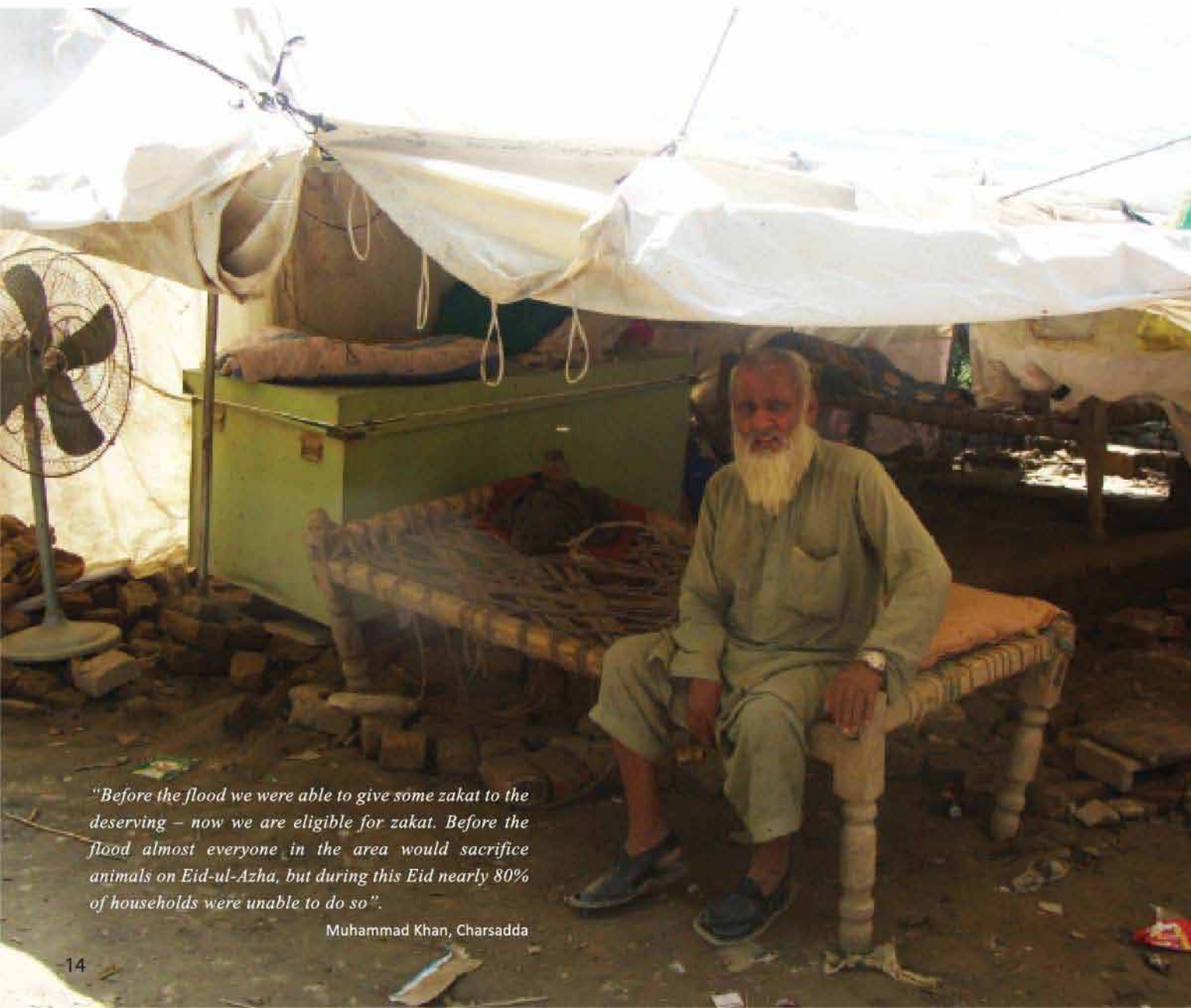
Noor Bibi, Kohistan

*"We lived in a kutchi abadi. The flood swept away our house – only its gate was left. We could not even shed tears. If someone talked we just stared at them blankly."*

Roshanara, Dera Ismail Khan

The flood did not even spare the dead. Graves were uprooted. People watched helplessly as the bodies of their loved ones floated in the water. Khatoon Bibi in Dera Ismail Khan was devastated. "I wanted to cry for them and for us and our situation," she said.

The losses have been severely impoverishing. Escalating inflation is adding to already unbearable economic pressures. Poor but independent farmers and workers are now dependant on charity to survive. Noor Bukhsh in Dera Ismail Khan has lost everything. "I am forced to beg," he said.



*"Before the flood we were able to give some zakat to the deserving – now we are eligible for zakat. Before the flood almost everyone in the area would sacrifice animals on Eid-ul-Azha, but during this Eid nearly 80% of households were unable to do so".*

Muhammad Khan, Charsadda





*"I was confident of a good crop this year. But then the flood destroyed the standing sugarcane. What was left was bitter. The molasses produced from it cannot be sold or used. Even the land has been affected. It is not ready for the next crop."*

Ali Ahmad, Charsadda

Agricultural losses severely disrupted livelihoods in Charsadda and Dera Ismail Khan. Sugarcane is one of the key cash crops cultivated in Charsadda – mostly on share-cropping basis. Normally, a crop would yield 875-1,000 kg molasses. But this year, the floods reduced the yield to around 20 kg, and its taste was also poor. In Dera Ismail Khan, farmers complained that a layer of mud brought by the flood had ruined arable land.

*"My husband was a tenant on a landlord's farm. The flood swept away the standing crops of sugarcane, rice, and vegetables, and brought a thick layer of mud that has made the land uncultivable. The government must help us reclaim the land and make it arable again,"*

Noor Bibi, Dera Ismail Khan

In the mountainous regions of Kohistan, livestock is a key source of income. With bridges and walkways washed away, livestock in high pasture areas was stranded. Farmers struggled to bring their livestock to lowland before winter started in the second half of September 2010. Incomes from forest products like walnut, almond, and also fruit like malta, apple, guava, and grapes were affected. And water-mills swept away by the floodwaters led to loss of income and also food insecurity.

Everywhere, small shops were destroyed and inventories, where available, washed away. Labour faced unemployment where factories were damaged. Also affected were incomes of men working as daily wagers, transporters and carpenters. Losses were also incurred by women earning a living through tailoring, embroidery and mat-making.

*"I had a grocery shop which was inundated along with my entire stock. I am now completely penniless. I don't know what to do now,"*

Ibrahim Khan, Dera Ismail Khan

Khadim, a vegetable vendor, was injured while fleeing the flood in Dera Ismail Khan. As he suffers from diabetes, his injury is taking time to heal. "I am not able to work anymore. If someone gets vegetables for me then I can sit in my shop and sell them," he said.

The loss of income is also affecting education. Ali Khan of Charsadda risks dropping out of university. "Before the flood my fees of Rs.1,000-1,200 in Allama Iqbal Open University was not such a big deal but now it seems like Rs.50,000. We are now very short of cash and have many demands on the meager funds available," he said.

*"We had invested everything in stocking inventory in the village store we ran. The flood destroyed the entire stock causing our financial ruin. We now have no source of income. My son sits at the store but there is very little to sell."*

Sadar Ayoob, Kohistan





Amidst unspeakable suffering, there were also signs of hope. In the face of such tragic circumstances, many communities also united, supporting each other in whichever way possible. From emotional support to food stock – everything was shared. Even old enmities were set aside, as people came together.

*"Even though we had lost our homes...everything, we tried to be a source of support to each other, sharing whatever foodstock had survived."*

**Shazia Bibi, Kohistan**

In Kohistan, many defiantly built makeshift bridges and chairlifts to restore access – to food, healthcare and even education and livelihood. In Charsadda, young people got involved in flood relief.

*"The extent of devastation inspired us to gather some funds and set up one of the first relief camps to assist others. We were tremendously encouraged by the collection of Rs.35,390, in the first three hours. We continued our efforts with greater energy. We later received a truckload of goods and collected upto Rs.300,000."*

**Mumtaz Hussain, Charsadda**

And for a very few, the flood brought opportunities. A mason in Charsadda is now better off due to substantially increased demand for his skills in house reconstruction. In Kohistan, floating timber was like gold. Alamgir Khan reported that his friend was able to gather floating timber worth Rs.3,000,000. "Before the flood he was a poor man -- now he is doing well," he said.

Local people in Kohistan build a makeshift bridge and use a pulley and cable to restore access







*"If support was not provided by NGOs and other citizens, we would not have been able to cope."*

Nighat Bibi, Charsadda



## Experience with relief assistance

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the government's disaster response. Saima Bibi from Charsadda was very upset. "The government should be like parents and be there for us when we need it. We are very disappointed and angry with the government," she said.

*"Relief! Do you know the meaning of relief? It is something that gives peace of mind, and reassurance. You feel content with it. But the relief assistance of the government...we don't know when it came and where it went? We just know it came, but don't know where it went?"*

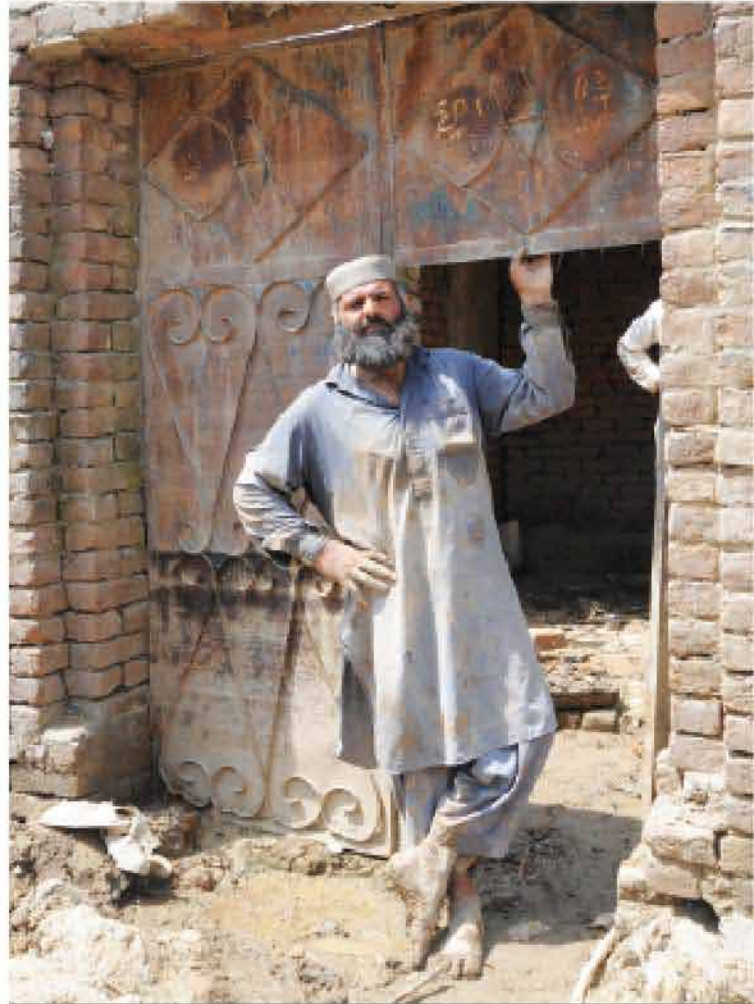
**Rasheed Khan, Dera Ismail Khan**

*"We filed a report in the local police station of a young man who was killed by the floods. But we have not got any compensation for his death."*

**Wajid Ali, Charsadda**

*"Our area is very remote. We did not get anything. Not even the DCO (District Coordination Officer, the highest officer in the district), SHO (Station House Officer, a police official), or any other official came to our rescue. They had to borrow money to relocate to safer areas."*

**Ali Ahsan, Kohistan**



The government should give us shelter which should have latrines. We also need buckets so that we can fetch water. Right now we carry water in lotas and pots which is very cumbersome. We also need ration card for food, schools and scholarships for children and some livelihood support – in this relief phase.

**Murad Khan, Charsadda**





*"Together we must ensure that the State fulfills its role,"*  
 Ali Asghar Khan talking with affected people in Dubair Valley, Kohistan



In sharp contrast, NGOs and also some political parties were commended for their prompt support.

*"We had lost all hope of any assistance as the bridges to our area were destroyed. Then we heard that an NGO would reach us by taking an alternate route via the Babusar Pass. It was difficult to believe. But we were delighted to see that the NGO kept its word. They brought good quality food, and also treated us with respect."*

**Hanan, Kohistan**

Food provided by an NGO





Agreeing on distribution priorities, Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and affected people, Kandian Valley, Kohistan

Women generally received relief second-hand. This was particularly true in Kohistan where conservative customs severely restrict women's mobility and interaction beyond her household and community. Also, as roads and bridges were destroyed, many in Kohistan walked for days to reach relief. This too decreased women's direct interaction with relief providers. However, they were delighted to find that relief assistance provided by many NGOs catered for their special needs. The presence of women in relief teams was also commended.

*"Among those distributing food was also a woman – and I thought, thank God there are women in this world that are coming out of their homes to help us."*

Rehmat Bibi, Kohistan

*"We lived in tents in a graveyard in which both my daughters-in-law gave birth to their children – one month apart. We received medical assistance from NGOs during childbirth,"*

Arifa Bibi, Charsadda



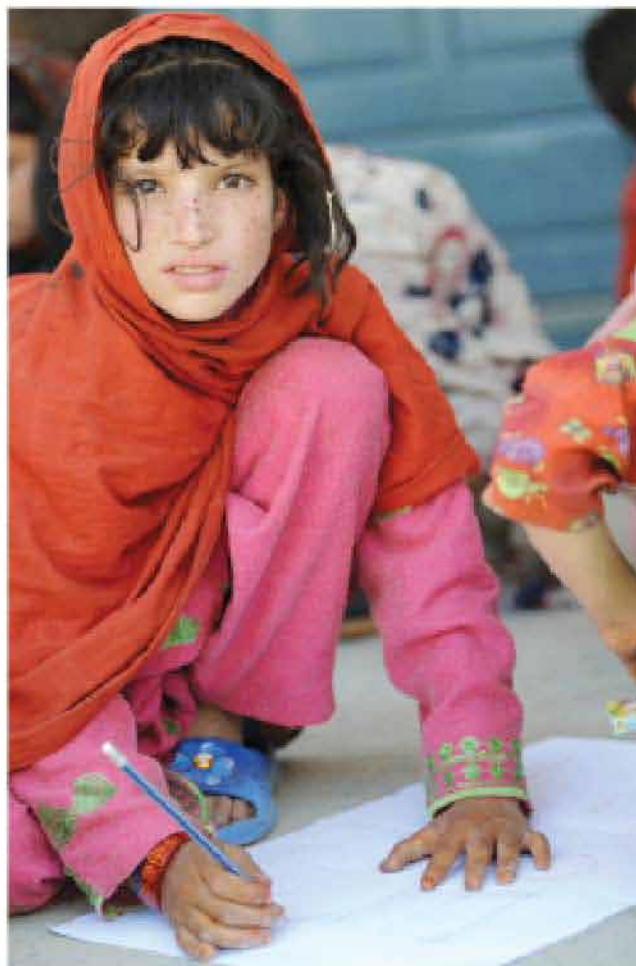
Assistance provided to the displaced was also sensitive to their needs, including seasonal needs of quilts and mattresses after winter started.

*"When we left our homes and made our way to Mansehra we were unsure of how we will cope. We had nothing. The support of NGOs helped us a great deal. They gave us pots and other basic items. We did not receive any other support."*

**Shakeel Ahmad, Kohistan**

*"We took shelter in a school where NGOs provided food, clothes, as well as toys and books for children. As winter approached we also got some warm clothes and quilts."*

**Rukhsana, Charsadda**



Psychosocial support for children through art therapy





An unintended impact of effective efforts by NGOs was that they countered the maligning propaganda against them.

*"Before the flood we were opposed to NGOs, and would talk against them, but now we are indebted to their support, and feel they are our friends."*

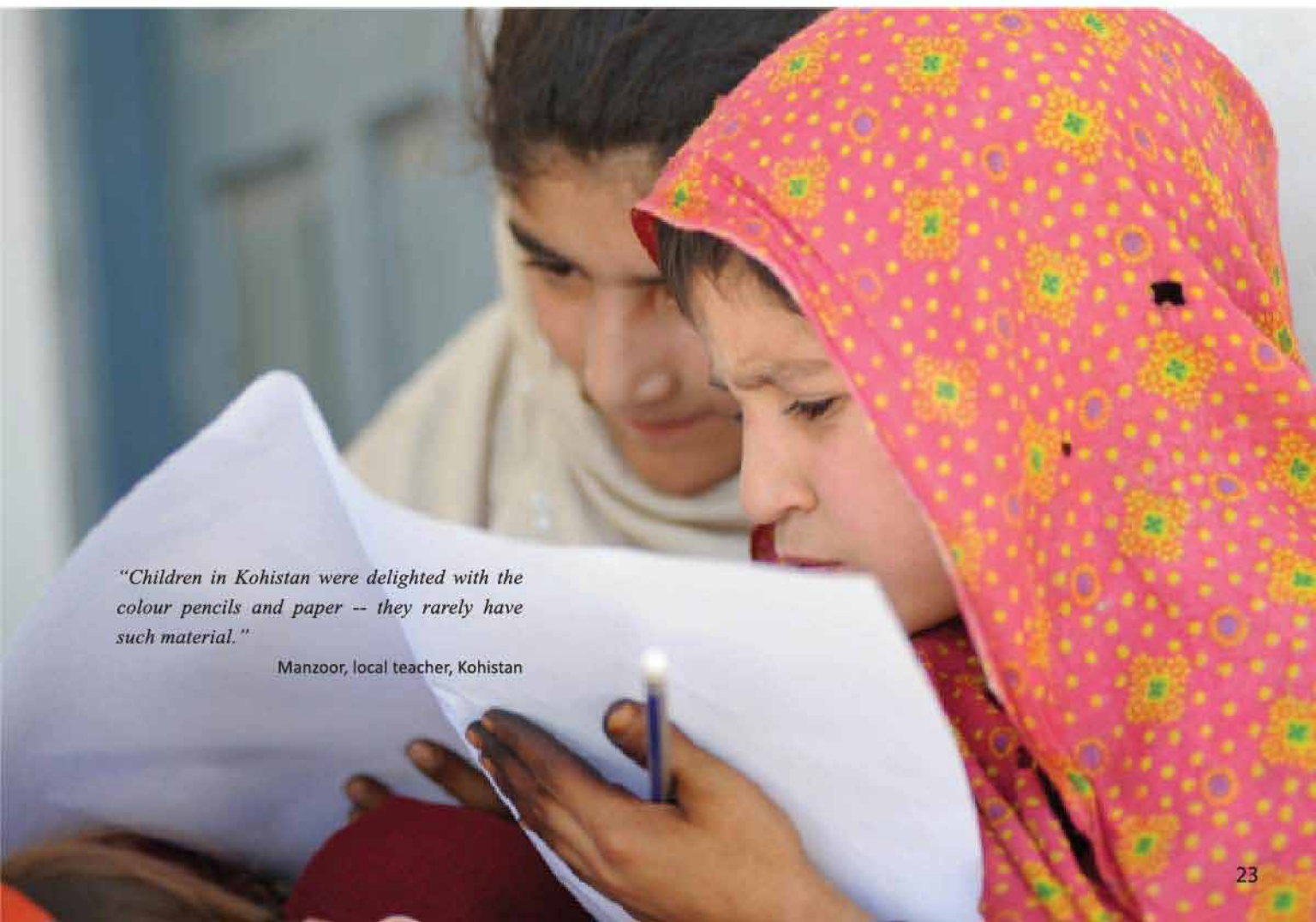
Sattar Khan, Kohistan



Female doctors provided healthcare to women in affected areas

*"Children in Kohistan were delighted with the colour pencils and paper -- they rarely have such material."*

Manzoor, local teacher, Kohistan







*"Assistance was often too little, too late. People were desperate -- they had to grab whatever they could."*

Taj Bhittani, Dera Ismail Khan



Communities reported that political expediencies often guided relief efforts by political parties and personalities. They also resented being used for photo-ops. Assistance given through local influential individuals often did not reach the deserving. Those living in narrow lanes criticized relief distributed to homes on the main road or within easy access. And, insufficient relief was the most common complaint.



*"We were injured by police lathi-charge as we tried to reach relief. The rush for assistance was due to the fact that the amount of assistance was hopelessly insufficient for the number of people needing it."*

Ghulam Muhammad, Charsadda

Quality of assistance was also criticized in some cases. For example, the colour and taste of grains provided by some organizations was of very poor quality. In some cases, certain items were found missing from relief packages.

People also complained about the discontinuation of aid by many organizations. Zubaida Begum of Dera Ismail Khan demanded continued relief, especially food for six more months. "Assistance was given for about three months and then it stopped," she complained.

Relief assistance was also provided by the Pakistan Army – but that too was inadequate and the process of distribution was bureaucratic. Assistance dropped from helicopters was often damaged or caked in mud. This added insult to injury. "They should not treat us like beggars – we did not ask for assistance," said Anar Khan of Kohistan.

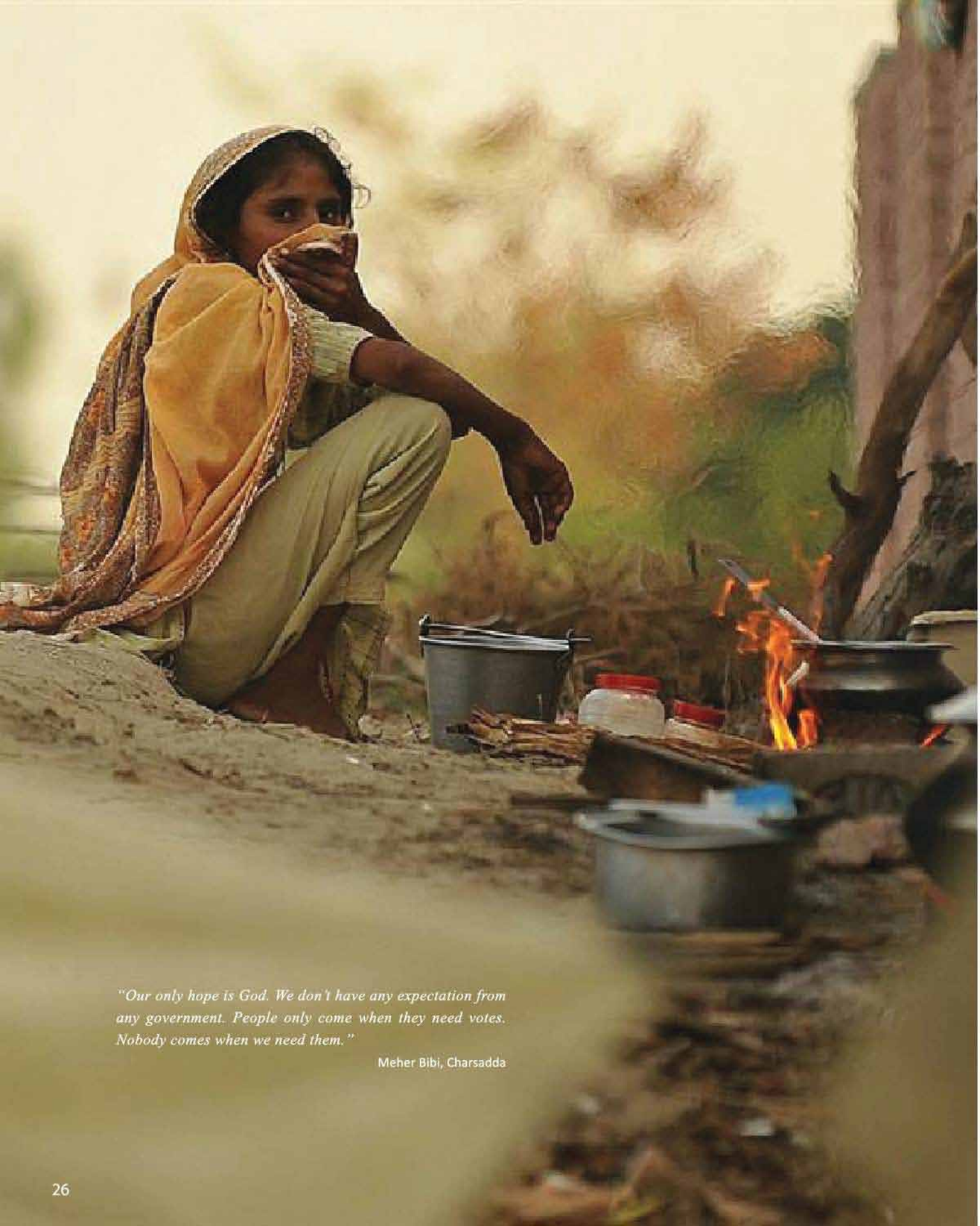
After three days some NGOs provided food and the army also appeared and distributed tents. But getting a tent was not easy. The army officer would call the head of each household, check their National Identity Card before issuing a tent.... even though it was clearly apparent that people were left on the roadside and were in a state of despair! Many did not get a tent as they did not have their NICs on them. And there were not enough tents.

Ahmad Khan, Dera Ismail Khan

There were also some cases where the community provided relief themselves. A 28-year Mohammad Ali Khan from Dera Ismail Khan decided to provide medical assistance to his community. "We tried to help by setting up a medical camp – but we only had Ponstan and Dispirin but people needed treatment for skin diseases and other ailments for which we had nothing," he lamented. Host families and communities in places like Mardan and Mansehra also extended assistance to those displaced by the flood.

*"For two days we just stayed at the bus stand under open skies with no support. We were hungry and tired. On the third day, some people from the adjoining village came to our rescue with biscuits, rice and roti.... My eyes were filled with tears at their generosity.... as they seemed so poor themselves."*

Rahim Khanzada, Dera Ismail Khan



*"Our only hope is God. We don't have any expectation from any government. People only come when they need votes. Nobody comes when we need them."*

Meher Bibi, Charsadda



## Policy priorities for long-term rehabilitation

Public clarity about the state's responsibility was perhaps as sharp as public disappointment with the perceived lack of effort to fulfill it. Some were angry. Murad Shah in Charsadda said, "I want to tell the government that they may not miss my vote – but in me they will find a new rebel."

Noor Shah of Dera Ismail Khan demanded accountability. "I want to know where are the funds provided by foreign countries and others for flood-relief? Why has it not reached us?" he asked. Others were either resigned to their fate or feared desperation.

*"Security of citizens' lives and livelihoods is the responsibility of the state. The government must fulfill its responsibility. It must help us – we are not begging for its support we are demanding it as our right."*

Dawood Saeed, Charsadda

*"The devastation is so great that without effective rehabilitation, people may be forced to turn to crime to cope."*

Omar Khanzada, Dera Ismail Khan



*"Without support there may be widespread starvation. Then what the government says will come true: that there will be no poor left in Pakistan."*

Masood-ur-Rehman, Kohistan

People generally expressed ignorance about any government rehabilitation policy or plan. The notable exception was the direct cash grant provided by the government through the Watan Card .

The cash provided by it was commended. Nargis in Charsadda said, “we only want cash.... if the government gives us cash, we can earn our own roti, kapra aur makan.”

The processing of the Watan Card was complicated and tedious. Farid Khan of Dera Ismail Khan explained, “at first a teacher and the patwari (revenue officer) surveyed our village to see the extent of damage. They prepared lists of the affected and noted NIC numbers. The patwari and also the teacher often asked for bribes to enter names in the list. Those who paid bribes got their names enlisted. Others were left out – or their names were listed with errors. Some paid Rs.5,000-10,000 as bribe.”



Watan (Urdu word meaning “nation”) Card is a machine-readable smartcard that uses modern biometric technology

We had to travel to a stadium which was 3 km away to access our Watan Cards. We would go there in a rickshaw. When we would reach the stadium there was always a huge crowd. People stood in long queues. The police often resorted to lathi-charge, some even accepted bribes to allow people inside. We had to make repeated visits for 2-3 days, after which we were able to get the Watan Card.

Fazalullah, Dera Ismail Khan



After 48 hours the Watan Card was activated, but there was generally a rush at the ATM and accessing funds was also not easy. In some cases the card was not activated in time due to errors in forms. There were complaints that some people pretended to assist others in using the ATM card but took the money themselves. Many people complained that they lost their Watan Cards in the rush at the ATM.

In Kohistan, even if a Watan Card was obtained it was difficult to access money from it as there is no ATM facility in the entire district.

*“I have to go to Abbottabad to use my Watan Card. A trip costs me Rs.4,000. I don’t know how to use the ATM and so have to ask for help from the bank staff. They are not very cooperative which adds to my problems.”*

Shahzareen, Kohistan



Some felt that the system of obtaining a Watan Card was also disrespectful. Noor Mohammad, a 75-year old man in Dera Ismail Khan, said, "I am too old to run after a Watan Card."

*"The process of accessing Watan Cards was very disrespectful. It robbed us of our dignity. It seems that the flood has taken our dignity away – before the flood we were living with respect and now we have become beggars."*

**Taj Mohammad, Charsadda**

*"My husband attempted to get the Watan Card but gave up when he had to spend too much money chasing it – and also lose his daily wage. Many were able to obtain Watan Cards by promising 50% of funds as bribe."*

**Tabinda Bibi, Dera Ismail Khan**

The size of cash transfer through the Watan Cards was criticized and it was recommended that funds should be disbursed in one lumpsum amount and not in installments.

*"The government promised Rs.100,000 through the Watan Card but we have only received Rs.20,000 as yet. Even if we get Rs.100,000 it is grossly inadequate as we cannot even purchase a buffalo with this amount."*

**Gulnaz, Charsadda**

The government should not give us support in four installments spread over two years like that given to people affected by the earthquake as they have not been able to rebuild their homes even after four years have passed since the earthquake. The size of support for house reconstruction should be adequate so that people can construct sturdy houses to withstand any future disasters.

**Zarbalund Khan, Kohistan**





Women were less aware of government support, especially those living in more remote regions.

*"I don't know much about this.... about any government plan, but have heard men talk. My husband said that the government will start work on a road, but he also says the government only shows us dreams and does not do much. He got a Watan Card from the government and received Rs.20,000 about two months back (around Oct-Nov 2010) but no more money has been received since then."*

**Nasreen Bibi, Kohistan**

*"I am so sorry I don't know much about government assistance. Women in our family do not go out. Our area is very conservative -- women are often not allowed to watch tv or listen to the radio. We hear about these issues from the men in the family."*

**Shaista Bibi, Kohistan**



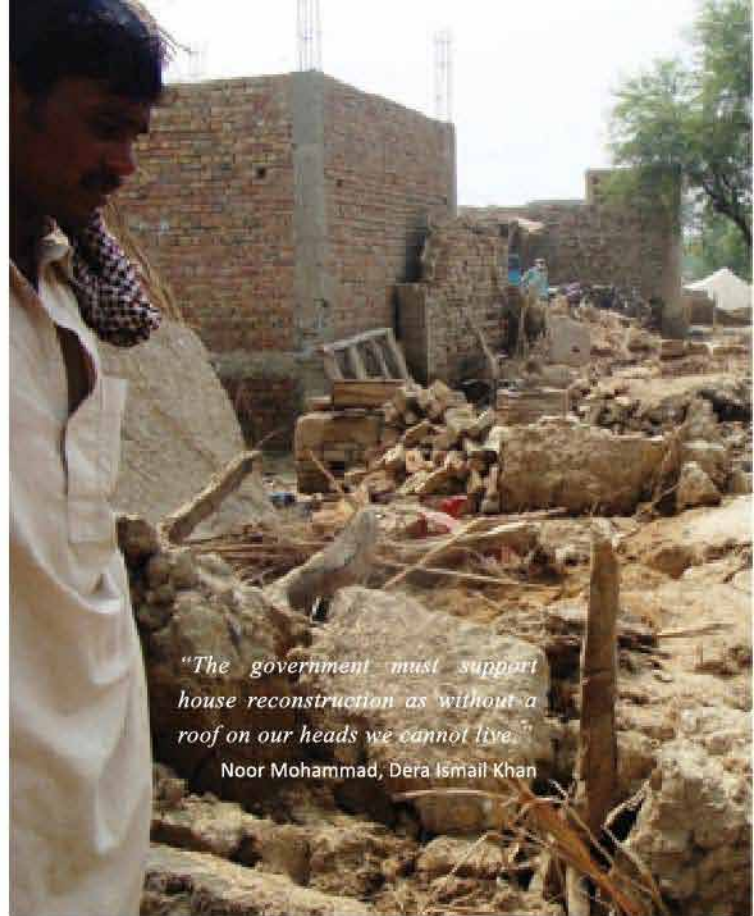
Shelter was among the key priorities that require rehabilitation support. Shaukat, a labourer in Charsadda was contemplating taking a loan to construct a basic structure. "At least the women in my family will have some shelter. We cannot continue to live in a tent," he said. Assistance is required for reconstructing houses, and also for clearing debris.

*"The government should provide construction material. The cost of constructing one room is about Rs.200,000 and our daily wage is about Rs.200 per day – how can we reconstruct our house."*

Shahida Bibi, Dera Ismail Khan

*"The government should give alternate land in Mansehra to those whose houses were washed away."*

Kulsoom Bibi, Kohistan



*"The government must support house reconstruction as without a roof on our heads we cannot live."*

Noor Mohammad, Dera Ismail Khan



*"I have lost most of my school books."*

Gulmina, Charsadda



Assistance is urgently required to restore livelihoods. Support for reviving agriculture and rehabilitating irrigation systems is needed to re-start disrupted incomes and also provide food assistance. Agricultural equipment should be given to farmers and assistance provided to drain out standing water in agricultural fields so that they may be prepared for the next crop. Waiving agricultural loans was suggested. It was also argued that the government should not collect its share of forest produce (20%) this year.

Credit for revitalizing small businesses is also required. Private investment and industry should also contribute to rehabilitation by creating jobs.

*"The government should provide fertilizers and seeds and also tractors to help restore agricultural activity. The government should also help restore arable land so that cultivation is possible."*

**Rahim Shah, Charsadda**

*"The government should provide interest-free loans to be repaid in easy installments to assist small businesses."*

**Ali Murad, Dera Ismail Khan**



*"Women should be given training in income generation activities such as poultry, kitchen-gardening, and midwife."*

**Rehana Begum, Charsadda**





*"We are grateful for external assistance to rebuild our suspension bridges."*

Taj Aziz, Kohistan

Destroyed infrastructure has also restricted access to markets and social services like health and education. Reconstruction of bridges, roads, and water channels needs urgent attention. Check dams should be constructed for better flood and water management. Retaining walls should also be constructed to protect against erosion. Reconstruction should employ local labour so that it also becomes a source of income for affected communities. Timber-cutting should be checked and investments made in reforestation and afforestation.

*"We can't depend on old dams, we need new dams. The canal should be relocated so that it is not able to inundate populated areas."*

Saira Khan, Charsadda

*"The government should also construct link canals with the main canal. It should construct protective embankment/dykes of about 4-6 ft high and 20-30 ft wide around the canals/drains to protect against future flooding."*

Zainnuddin, Charsadda



*"The government should line canals and make them concrete so that water management is improved. Regular dredging of canals should be done. Drainage should also be improved. A storm water drain serves the purpose of drainage in our area. It is about 50-60 ft wide. But it is not cleaned and also people have made paths in the drain. When the flood waters entered the drain it was not able to flow through – the pressure of the water was so intense that it breached the sides of the drain and overflowed towards the city and inundated it."*

**Hassan Khanzada, Dera Ismail Khan**

*"Bridges constructed more than 100 years ago allowed floods in the past to flow into the Indus. But in 2006, during the reconstruction of the Indus Highway, these bridges were torn down on the Dera Bannu Road. Due to this when the flood approached this area it entered Shorkot. We demand that the bridges should be rebuilt."*

**Ahmad Khan, Dera Ismail Khan**

The government must urgently rebuild social services like schools and healthcare. Teams should be constituted to oversee the quality of construction and ensure availability of trained staff. Provision of clean drinking water was also included in priority needs.



*"Schools and healthcare facilities must be promptly rebuilt."*

**Malik Aurangzeb, Kohistan**



*"Health hazards will increase if destroyed healthcare facilities are not quickly reconstructed. Doctors and other medical staff are also required – they have always been in short supply. The government must also ensure that medicines are available and that there is no shortage of medicines."*

**Wazir Khan, Charsadda**

Proper planning and on-site assessments were recommended to ascertain location-specific rehabilitation needs. Gul Khan stressed that, "decisions should not be taken while sitting in Dassu [central town in Kohistan]." He recommended that generators should be included in the rehabilitation package for Kohistan.

Public recommendations also focused on future disasters. They recommended early warning systems which can save lives. Forewarning is also critical to give people time to secure their assets before a disaster strikes.

*"In Sindh and Punjab, the provincial governments were able to give adequate forewarning which saved lives and livelihoods – that did not happen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,"*

**Mirza Khan, Kohistan**

Many also suggested that the government should set aside funds in their annual budgets so that it is able to promptly respond to disasters. Public finance should also be allocated to establish centers at the union council-level to deal with emergencies. A team of volunteers should be available at the centers to provide rescue and relief assistance. Citizens should also be trained in disaster management and response.

*"The government must ensure that public finances are set aside to provide urgent and prompt relief assistance at the time of any disaster."*

**Omar Wazir Khan, Dera Ismail Khan**

*"The government must ensure that no future disaster is able to wreak the kind of havoc as the 2010 flood caused to the people and area of Kohistan."*

**Zarbuland, Kohistan**



Dubair bazaar in Kohistan, before (left) and after (right) the floods





راستے اور شریک جال کرو۔  
تقریب حقوق عزاہہ کوہستان

حسین علیہ السلام  
سید الشہداء



## Public Recommendations for Government Rehabilitation Policies & Support

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Aman Ittehad (United for Peace) is a citizen coalition that brings together hundreds of activists, journalists, lawyers, business leaders, trade unionists, students, teachers, peasants, and artistes from across Pakistan. It strives for peace in Pakistan through democratic governance, rule of law, justice and a life of dignity for all citizens. Many within its nationwide network of citizen organizations were directly affected by the 2010 flood and were also involved in flood relief in different parts of the country.

Drawing on their collective on-the-ground experiences including the dialogue documented in this publication, the Aman Ittehad compiled the following set of public recommendations. These were issued through the media on the occasion of the Pakistan Development Forum held on 14-15 November 2010. The PDF is an annual event at which the Government of Pakistan and its donor partners discuss strategic direction, priorities & policies. The focus of this PDF was the post-2010 flood in Pakistan.





## AMAN ITTEHAD DEMANDS EFFECTIVE REHABILITATION & REFORMS IN POST-FLOOD PAKISTAN

Islamabad, 14 November 2010: Aman Ittehad expressed its deep concern over the lack of planning by the government and the absence of political will to provide relief and rehabilitate the millions that have been affected by the 2010 flood in Pakistan. The devastations caused by the flood reflect a failure of the state to provide sustainable and effective protections to its citizens against such natural calamities.

The Ittehad demands immediate implementation of post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction plans and policies without any prejudice, discrimination or omissions. All rehabilitation actions must empower citizens and reduce the trust deficit between the state and citizens. These efforts must follow the vision of a new and reformed Pakistan based on the framework of equality, rights, restoration of the balance of power, and empowerment of all, especially the more vulnerable. The state must present a new social contract that highlights rights and entitlements of citizens and the responsibilities of the state.

Reverting to old patterns of citizenship, infrastructures, laws and policies, economies, and protection, will hamper our ability to move forward as a nation.

The resettlement and rebuilding must respect the will and choice of people regarding relocation, livelihood, and community arrangements.

Special attention must be given to involve women from affected areas in the disaster management processes, at the district, provincial and national levels. Indigenous solutions for rebuilding must be pursued and donor-imposed products must not be imposed on people. The Ittehad also demands:

- Urgent action to complete the issuance of National ID Cards and correct the record of NADRA so that those that have been denied Watan Cards due to incomplete or incorrect documentation are not denied their entitlement to compensation or claims for relief and rehabilitation services;
- Immediate replacement or compensation for loss of livestock; and, debt relief by writing off microfinance borrowings by farmers from landlords for crops that were destroyed in the flood;
- Allotment of 12 acres of land for women farmers affected by the flood. Also special attention to support women in resuming agricultural activities; and, providing training in cooperative farming, alternative cropping, kitchen gardening, preservation of vegetables and dairy farming;
- Compensation of land lost due to soil erosion in the flash flood to small land owners and measures to stop further erosion;
- Compensation for losses to small traders and businesses, along with interest-free bank loans for a period of 5 years to rebuild their businesses;
- Exemplary action and zero tolerance against any form of discrimination against religious minorities in relief or biased relief operations based on political affiliations;
- Effective consultation with affected people in drawing up reconstruction plans for houses, schools, health facilities and other public services;
- Inclusion of rehabilitation of location-specific priorities such as access in Kohistan (KPK) and other areas in Gilgit-Baltistan along with more pervasive concerns like agriculture, etc.;



- Immediate rehabilitation of infrastructure to restore access to affected populations still effectively stranded in the mountainous regions. Until access is restored, affected people must be provided food rations and cash grants to off-set carriage costs of goods;

- Strict monitoring must be done to ensure good quality and design of bridges, check dams, spurs and retaining walls. Any transgression should be strictly penalized;

- Along with stopping deforestation, government action to establish mechanisms for storage and transportation of timber in mountainous areas; and strict monitoring of hazardous storage of timber particularly prior to the monsoon;

- Owner-driven policy for supporting house reconstruction. Lumpsum compensation must be paid to each household existing within a joint family system without discriminating on the basis of gender or marital status. The compensation should be paid to the woman of the household, where possible. The government should only provide necessary technical training and assistance in material supply;

- Provision of scholarships to all students from the flood affected areas pursuing higher education and provision of books, stationary and cash support to all other flood affected students for a period of 3 years;

- Land reforms, beginning with allotting for the landless (including women) a minimum of 12 acres of land per affected family; the title of land ownership allotted to the woman of the household. All revenue records and data to be computerized;

- Provision of universal social protection, according to Article 38 of the Constitution; self registration of those affected by the flood for social protection; extension of 'unemployment benefits', 'protection against disasters', 'old age benefits', 'disability allowance';

- Decentralization of relief operations; complete autonomy for provincial and district-level disaster management machinery; and channeling resources for relief and rehabilitation through the provinces;

- Immediate restoration of local government and the devolution of power and autonomy to the districts for decision-making and execution;

- Massive budget reprioritization to address resource constraints to meet rehabilitation needs. This must include reduction in non-development expenditures of public sector and unnecessary allocation of funds for defence expenditure;

- Resource mobilization through directly taxing the rich by extending the tax net and also by looking creatively at government land and buildings including GORs and Cantonment lands. Allocations of housing and vehicles to senior government servants should also be replaced by cash remuneration to free up valuable public assets and reduce expenses;

- The state must present a strong debt cancellation plan and a unified demand to donors for retiring unfair debt on Pakistan. All savings must be diverted to reconstruction and rebuilding post-flood Pakistan;

- All assistance from foreign donors and international financial institutions must be in grants or donations and not in loans because in the case of the latter the burden of economic hardships ultimately affects women the most. In consideration of the unprecedented flood crisis that has affected most parts of Pakistan and has severely affected agriculture and economy, the foreign governments and international financial institutions should also write-off their previous loans to Pakistan;

- Monitoring of engagement between all humanitarian actors including the government, UN, INGOs, and national and local NGOs to promote empowered partnership. The current unequal relationship is reflected in the issues of accountability, transparency, and resource-sharing that undermines the capacity of national assistance organizations.







