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# FLASH UPDATE

## UNHCR's Emergency Response to South Asia Earthquake

### Highlights

According to the Pakistan government, the death toll now stands at more than 23,000 people dead and more than 47,000 injured, since a 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit South Asia on 8 October 2005. Initial assessments suggest that in some areas of northern Pakistan, 80-90% of villages and cities have been damaged.

The focus is shifting from search and rescue to emergency humanitarian assistance. Relief aid is increasingly urgent as temperatures drop with the approach of winter. Night time temperatures in some of the affected areas hover around 5 degrees Celsius.

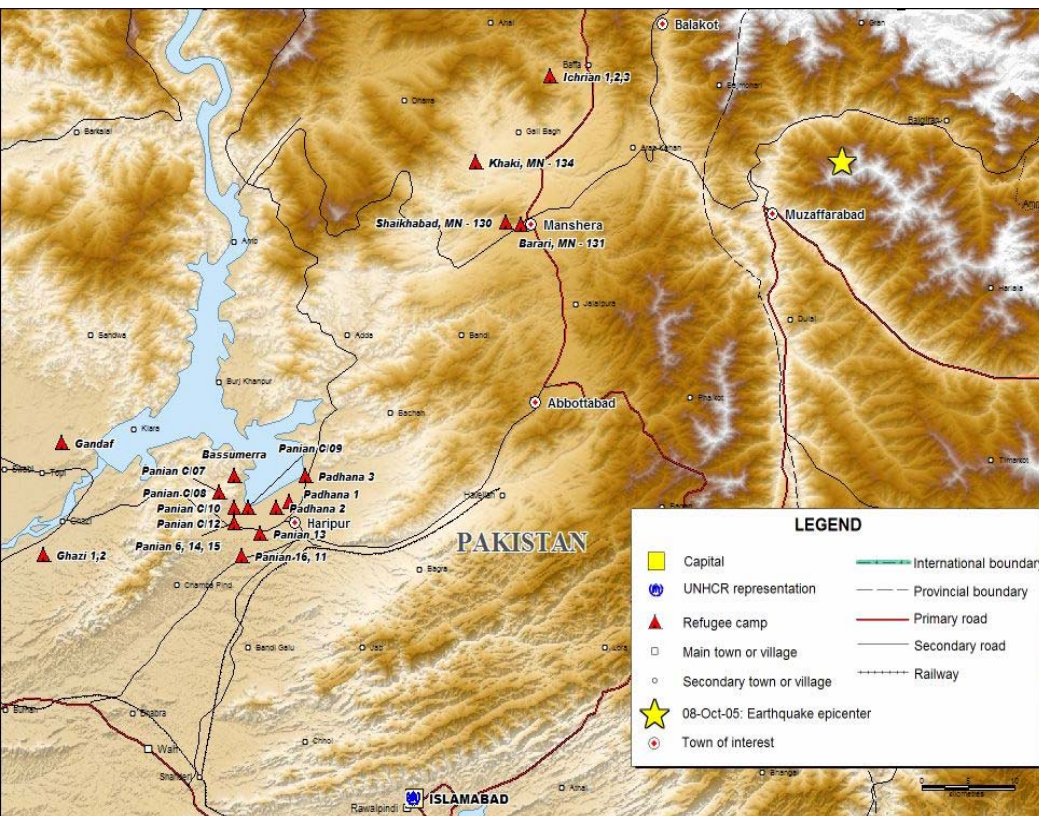
Most major roads are now open, including the ones linking Islamabad to hard-hit areas like Mansehra in North West Frontier Province (NWFP)

and Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Still, some sections of roads remain blocked by land slides or by the sheer number of relief convoys (local and international) rushing into affected areas. For example, a traffic jam was reported on 11 October in Abbotabad, preventing relief items from reaching Mansehra quickly. Some areas are still fragile and have limited capacity to handle heavy trucks bringing in aid.

The UN Consolidated Flash Appeal was officially launched on 11 October 2005.

### Impact on Afghan refugees in NWFP

UNHCR is the lead agency for the Camp Management Cluster and is responsible for the coordination of the overall camp management response primarily in areas where refugee and local populations are located together. UNHCR will coordinate its activities with various partner agencies. The Appeal for this cluster amounts to USD 22 million over the next six months. UNHCR is also partner in food/nutrition and protection clusters.



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UNHCR assists the Government of Pakistan in hosting more than 880,000 Afghan refugees in camps in NWFP. The worst-hit camp areas are around Abbotabad – in Hari-pur district (three camps hosting some

100,000 refugees) and Mansehra district (four camps hosting nearly 50,000 refugees). Camps west of Haripur away from the epicenter are generally unaffected by the earthquake, with only minor, isolated damage to houses reported.

Bad road conditions and poor telecommunications after the earthquake have prevented UNHCR staff from confirming the condition of refugees in Haripur and Mansehra districts. Reports so far have been from government authorities and our NGO partners on the ground.

The Chief Commissioner of Afghan Refugees of Pakistan has reported that 12 refugees have died in and around Mansehra district's camps, including four refugees in Ichirian camp and eight outside camps. Another three refugee children were reported to have died in Jalozai camp in Nowshera district. 34 refugees were injured in different camps in the area. At least 105 houses were damaged in the camps, including 55 in Ichirian camp, and 25 each in Khaki and Barary camps.

## **UNHCR involvement and response**

Upon the request by the Government of Pakistan to the Secretary-General for international assistance, UNHCR became involved in the situation within the overall UN response. UNHCR's participation in the earthquake response in Pakistan is based on the fact that the area hosts a large number of Afghans who have been affected by the earthquake together with the local population in the host communities. Within the UN Country Team, UNHCR will coordinate the response in the camp management cluster and provide multi-sectoral assistance, primarily in the areas where refugees and local populations are located together. The Office also provides humanitarian assistance in the affected region given the large UNHCR presence in the country and the immediate availability of relief items.

In the early hours of the crisis, UNHCR has opened its warehouse in NWFP's provincial capital, Peshawar. Relief items were made available including 1,400 winterized family tents, 21 hospital tents, 10,700 plastic sheets, 10,800 kitchen sets, 2,400 GI sheets and 22,000 pieces of soap.

On Monday October 10, UNHCR sent 45 family tents, 15 hospital tents, 500 each of plastic sheets, foam mattresses, emergency lamps and kitchen sets, as well as ground sheets, soap and battery cells with a WHO convoy to Mansehra.

On Tuesday October 11, two UNHCR staff members – a doctor and field officer – left Peshawar for Abbotabad and Mansehra to assess the camp situation for themselves.

On Wednesday October 12, a separate two-man UNHCR team left Islamabad to assess the extent of displacement in Balakot, further north of Mansehra. Logistics permitting, UNHCR plans to start sending emergency supplies such as tents and blankets to this devastated area on Thursday, 13 October.

To keep up the pace of aid delivery, UNHCR is moving supplies from its warehouse in Quetta, Balochistan province, to Islamabad for further distribution. These include more than 3,000 tents, some 2,000 blankets, some 800 plastic sheets and more than 2,000 kerosene stoves.

## **Immediate needs**

UNHCR Pakistan has asked for more emergency relief items – including 10,000 tents, 200,000 blankets, 25,000 plastic sheets and 50,000 jerry cans – from the agency's stocks in the region and beyond. Trucks in Afghanistan are currently being loaded with relief items to be sent to Pakistan. Airlifts of supplies from Dubai, Turkey, Copenhagen and Amman are forthcoming.

## **Outlook for the coming days**

UNHCR expects that at least 50 per cent of the affected region will initially be assessed by Friday, 14 October. This will allow UNHCR to refine and increasingly target its response. Currently, the main focus, in addition to the assessment, is to transfer most urgently needed relief items to the affected areas. UNHCR has been in contact with a number of donors to receive in-kind assistance and transportation.