

UNHCR and UN-HABITAT join hands to help the displaced living with host families

Islamabad May 27, 2009: To respond to the needs of displaced people residing outside camps, UNHCR and UN-HABITAT have joined hands to provide shelter supplies to some of the most vulnerable displaced people living with vulnerable host families in Mardan and Swabi districts of NWFP.

UNHCR is providing 5,000 tents to be distributed by UN-HABITAT for families staying outside of camps within the local community. Distribution of the first batch of 1,131 tents began this week to families identified by UN-HABITAT as most in need in Babeni, Katlang II, Shamozi Union Councils of Mardan district, and will continue over the next week.

“Host families have seen their households double and even triple overnight as they’ve opened their doors to provide refuge to the displaced people. We are providing tents to particularly needy families which can be pitched within the grounds of their hosts to help alleviate crowded conditions,” said UNHCR Pakistan Representative Ms. Guenet Guebre-Christo.

To complement this effort, UN-HABITAT is also assisting with the provision of hygiene kits and latrines to households and supporting minor repairs of shelters and boundary walls. The agency is also providing locally procured alternative shelter kits as appropriate and assisting communities for emergency repair of community facilities such as water hand pumps and sanitation in local mosques.

“IDP families residing with host families from the previous caseload and the new influx constitute the majority of the displaced population yet they receive negligible support. Our surveys show that they endure severely inadequate shelter and living conditions, including widespread overcrowding and poor sanitation. We are trying to reach the most vulnerable IDPs with our intervention, including this joint effort with UNHCR.” said Mr Siamak Moghaddam, Country Program Manager, UN-HABITAT Pakistan.

UNHCR is planning to distribute more relief items to displaced people staying in host communities as supplies and further funding comes in. The agency has already begun distributing mattresses, blankets, buckets, kitchens sets and jerry cans to some 4,500 families staying in schools in Mardan.

This joint UN-HABITAT and UNHCR initiative is part of a longer term plan to assist in the safe and dignified return of IDPs to their homes.

Media contacts:

UN-HABITAT, Muhammad Kamran Abbassi 0333 542 8128
UNHCR: Ariane Rummery 0300 500 1133; Duniya Khan 0333 7819143