

UNHCR completes Khalifa Foundation-funded project

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has completed the project funded by Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan Foundation, aimed at supporting vital humanitarian operations in Pakistan.

The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan Foundation forged a partnership agreement with UNHCR in mid 2009 for assisting the internally displaced people (IDPs) from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and tribal areas of Pakistan.

With help from the foundation, UNHCR procured some 25,000 temporary shelter kits including bamboo poles, timber, corrugated iron, tools and plastic sheets. Now UNHCR has started the construction of temporary shelters in Swat, Buner and Lower Dir for internally displaced people who have returned to homes destroyed or significantly damaged, thanks to donations from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Khalifa Foundation funded project is also providing five welfare centres for returning IDPs and host families in Swat district, in areas where there is a high concentration of returnees. The centres provide protection activities and community services like psycho-social and trauma support, with a special focus on women and children.

The launch of these programmes in return areas completes a much larger project for Pakistan's internally displaced funded by the UAE with several components. Between July and September 2009, some 182,000 people travelled home to the Malakand Division with transport assistance facilitated by the Provincial Relief Commissionerate and funds supported by the Foundation.

Similarly, in the lead up to Eid in September 2009, around 20,000 Eid packages including rice, sugar, dates, spices, juice powder, flour and tea were given to IDPs living in camps in the Frontier province. Emergency family relief kits of mosquito nets, sleeping mats, jerry cans, cooking sets, quilts, plastic sheets and other household items were provided for more than 852,000 people living in and outside of camps, between August and October.

"With the generous support of the Khalifa Foundation, UNHCR has been able to provide relief to hundreds of thousands of displaced people over the last seven months," said UNHCR's Assistant Representative Mr Kilian Kleinschmidt.

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“At each critical phase, we have been able to respond quickly with the support of the Khalifa Foundation - from the emergency phase when people need basic household items to help them survive away from home, to extra food at Eid, to help to return and rebuild. Every step of the way, this donation has helped UNHCR to help Pakistan’s IDPs.”

“This has been a timely and important gesture of solidarity by the people of the UAE for Pakistanis at this difficult time,” said Kleinschmidt.

Each temporary shelter unit in the programme now underway in Swat, Buner and Lower Dir, is designed to accommodate a family of seven, and has adequate space for a living area, kitchen and latrine. Larger families are entitled to two shelter units. UNHCR and its partners are implementing a community-based approach to shelter construction, whereby returned IDP families work on the shelter with help from specially trained implementing and operational partners while materials have been funded by the Kalifa Foundation. Some 130 shelters are already complete in Swat district.

Since August 2008, more than 3.1 million people in north-west Pakistan have been registered and verified by the government in various waves of displacement. The figure includes people from Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai and South Waziristan agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, as well as Swat, Buner, Dir and Shangla of the NWFP. Around 1.95 million people are reported by the government to have returned to their home areas while 1.12 million individuals are still displaced in Pakistan.

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