

INSHALLA

THE WILL OF GOD



Article & Photography by Eileen O'Leary



The Facts...

PAKISTAN

Pakistan lies between latitudes 24 and 37 degrees north and longitudes 62 and 75 degrees east covering a total land area of 798,095 sq km. Pakistan shares its borders with Iran to the west, India in the southeast, Afghanistan in the northwest and China in the north. The Arabian Sea lies to its south. Pakistan is of great topographic and climatic contrasts. The topography varies from coastal beaches, deserts, plateaus, plains and high snow covered mountains. The country is geographically divided into three areas: the northern highlands, the Indus river plains and the Balochistan plateau.

Pakistan is among the high risk countries and the natural hazards include floods, earthquakes, cyclones, drought and landslides.

THE EARTHQUAKE

An earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck the northern areas of Pakistan and India 8.50 am local time 8th October 2005. Its epicentre was 19 km northeast of Muzaffarabad. Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) were severely affected. It was the worst earthquake to hit the region in the last century. Since that day more than 1,200 aftershocks have been recorded in the region, some of them close to 6.0 on the Richter scale. This region was home to a scattered population of some 5.7 million people. The social structure in this region is closely knit, and families on average comprise of 7 people per household. 88% of residents live in hilly, mountainous rural settlements. 42% of the population is below 15 years of age. Agriculture and livestock rearing account for 70% of the total household income.

The total cost of the earthquake is estimated to be \$5.2 billion.

Top ten contributors to the United Nations Flash Appeal have come from Sweden, the United States, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Netherlands, Australia, France and Germany.

171 local and international organisations are working in collaboration in the relief effort

THE PEOPLE

It is estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 people died.

Estimates indicate that 3.5 million people have been affected by the disaster and are in need of assistance, including winterised shelter, medical care, food and water and sanitation facilities.

Most people have lost more than one family member.

The estimate of school aged children who died in the earthquake is over 18,000 most of them being either primary or secondary school children. Thousands of children have been wounded, made orphans or both, and almost all are traumatised. The earthquake claimed the lives of 853 teachers. 450,000 children aged between 5-9 years require immediate access to primary education.

Estimated early recovery cost for the Education sector is 40,000,000.

The number of school children affected total 955,000.

The number of women affected (aged 15-49) total 800,000.

Three children are crouched down at the riverside in the small town of Bagh in Pakistan administered Kashmir; it is seven o'clock in the morning, the ground is frozen, they are just wearing summer clothes and the youngest boy is shivering and wheezing with what may be the onset of an acute respiratory infection. Their parents, Yameema and Ibrahim are living in an unofficial campsite in the hopes that they may get help from the NGO's (Non Governmental Organisations) in town. They have moved down from a mountain village where their home was decimated by the earthquake on the 8th of October. There are seven of them living in a tent that just has a few blankets on the floor and a cooking pot. Yameema has an artificial leg and is finding it difficult to crouch down to cook; Ibrahim's face is pinched from the cold and strained with worry. It is hard to imagine how this family will survive the harsh Himalayan winter under such circumstances.



Over three million people have been displaced and are living on the sides of mountains by the ruins of their homes, in managed tent villages or are still in hospital being treated for serious hip, spinal and long bone fractures which have left them either paralysed as a result of roofs falling on them or with amputations as they were left trapped in ruins for days before being airlifted to hospital for treatment. Many of the casualties are women and children; they now face an uncertain future as there are no support services for people with disabilities in Pakistan.

Young girls dressed in shalwar kamiz blue uniforms walk past the river on their way to The Government Girls

High School in Bagh. Their school is in ruins; 200 of the 800 students died on the 8th of October, their satchels and copy books still lying poignantly in the rubble. Open air classes are taking place where the school used to be; the noise of workmen breaking concrete fills the air while lessons in English, History and Maths take place. Teachers and 300 children are dealing with the effects of post

traumatic stress and focusing on learning is helping to give life some semblance of normality. Throughout Bagh are signs posted that read 'Education is Rehabilitation,' but some children are too proud to attend school without their uniform or books or are injured and unable to get transport from outlying villages. Two lines of students crouch down as they tackle a maths problem; from this year group alone, 75 children were killed in the earthquake.

In the mountain village of Mariola, Simon Roughneen of GOAL Ireland is waiting with a group of village elders in anticipation of the sound of tractors and trailers. The Massey Ferguson tractors climb steeply up switchbacks on a narrow boulder strewn road in order to deliver tents and blankets on behalf of GOAL Ireland who have based themselves in Bagh. Simon feels that, 'The onus is on relief agencies to get the shelter materials and food to people at altitude in advance of the snow coming, as roads will become impassable. The UN can only fly helicopters - vital once roads are closed - until mid-January because the money just isn't there. Thankfully the winter snows have held off for now but the Pakistani Met Office predict that this years' winter will be more severe than usual; quite a statement given that areas above 5000 feet



The Facts...

THE PEOPLE

Ten weeks after the disaster thousands of injured and needy people in isolated and mountainous areas are without adequate food and shelter.

Major concerns are for a variety of social groups who have become vulnerable in the aftermath of the disaster. These include unaccompanied and disabled children and women at risk of being trafficked, sold into forced marriage, or abducted and subjected to violence and abuse; single women and children facing additional social and economic marginalisation and physical threats, the injured coping with physical and psychological impairments; members of female households, widows and orphaned children having little or no access to services and supplies and are at risk of losing property claims; the young, elderly and disabled living without a functional support network; and the displaced finding their land occupied by others.

More than 50,000 children have suffered severe injuries, resulting in amputations and other debilitating physical injuries. Most of the injured have some sort of bone trauma and in many cases will require physiotherapy and artificial limbs.

Those children who survived the earthquake with permanent disabilities will find it difficult to attend school and access employment in later life. Many of these children are orphaned making them even more vulnerable to poverty, neglect, abuse and violence; child protection has become a pressing concern.

THE BUILDINGS

Most of the buildings had poor earthquake resilience. Of the total housing stock, 84% was damaged and destroyed in AJK and 36% damaged or destroyed in NWFP. Virtually all major public buildings have been partially damaged or destroyed. The earthquake destroyed 203,597 units of housing and damaged another 196,574. There is a strong determination among many of the affected populations to stay close to their homes, due to deep emotional and social ties.

574 health facilities were damaged or destroyed.

10,000 schools were destroyed. In Balakot, two mass graves dominate the site that was once the largest high school in the area.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

- **Provision** of winterised shelter & food
- **Protection** of vulnerable groups
- **Respond** to the psychosocial needs of students, teachers and parents in dealing with the trauma cause by the earthquake and its aftermath
- **2.4 million** winter quality blankets or 1.2 million quilts at a cost of 31 million
- **170,000** plastic sheets at a cost of 4 million
- **200,000** tarps costing 9.5 million

IRELAND'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE RELIEF EFFORT

- **Government contribution** 10 million
- **Public contributions** to GOAL 1.5 million
- **Public contributions** to Concern 4.9 million
- **Public contributions** to Trócaire 1.1 million
- **40 containers** to the value of 20,000 Euro have been sent to Pakistan by communities around Ireland. The Carrigaline & District Lions Club and Cork Muslim Association have accounted for 16 of the 40 containers. The contents of the containers were; blankets, duvets, sleeping bags, warm clothes and winterised tents.

INFORMATION TAKEN FROM:

Pakistan 2005 Earthquake, Early Recovery Framework, United Nations November 2005

Preliminary Damage & Needs Assessment, Asian Development Bank & World Bank November 2, 2005

Indigenous Coping Mechanisms for Disaster Management, Church World Services-Pakistan/Afghanistan, February, 2005

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Needs, Situation report 27

Maps of Pakistan and the earthquake area can be accessed at UNJLMaps@googlemail.com

receive at least 6 feet of snow and night time temperatures of minus 15 degrees. The danger is that if people are not sheltered properly, they will move en masse to uncontrolled camps, with huge health-sanitation and social issues which an already under funded and overstretched relief effort would be hard-pressed to cope with.'

Muzaffarabad and Balakot were the towns nearest to the epicenter of the earthquake that measured 7.6 on the Richter scale. Balakot is filled with dust and diggers; all the buildings are flattened with little indication of what stood in the place of all the concrete, the metal ornamentation from the top of the mosque fallen askew in the rubble. The surrounding hillsides are etched white where landslides have carved a treacherous path. Next to the site of what was the Royal Hotel a teenager stands by a grave that holds seven members of his family; plastic roses and bricks mark their resting place, he is stoical in the face of such tragedy.

Dr. Abdul Aziz Awan, Chairperson of the Abbotonians Medical Association was one of the first people to make his way to Balakot on the 8th of October. He had the agonizing experience of watching his younger brother die, unable to rescue him from the crushing roof that trapped him. Government estimates are that 73,000 people died; Dr Awan said, 'We could have saved so many more people had we been more prepared.' The harsh learning from the experience has resulted in the formation of the Disaster Management Centre in Abbottabad, and fundraising for a mobile unit that is equipped to deal on the spot with casualties and plans for a fully stocked warehouse of medical supplies and a 60 bed trauma centre.

Balakot has seen a joyous occasion in the past week, a wedding in the Pattan tent village just outside the town, it is a sign that life is continuing and that even in such extreme situations faith, love and hope are ever present. The Pattan Development Organisation has been working

intensively with riverine communities since the flood disaster of 1992 promoting gender equality for women. Experience has shown that women are most severely impacted as the result of any natural disaster; victims are usually poor and within this group women and children are the most vulnerable. Sarwar Bari, National Coordinator of the project sees the current situation as a very big challenge and is concerned that the international response to the earthquake may create a 'recipient mentality.' He feels that, 'there is a flood of external agencies; there is a lot of sharing but also a lot of duplication, we need to working at a grass roots level. Everyone is busy doing something but

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there has not been much time for reflection. We have to ensure that we are not creating vulnerability, making people dependant. People need to be actively involved in the reconstruction work. It is vital that women have an active part in the decision making at village level.' Bari's organization has certainly pushed the boundaries of gender equality; in a society that views a woman's role to be in the home; they have generated housing projects promoting joint property ownership for women that brings women respect and authority in their home and in the community.

A young woman lies on a bed outside a tent surrounded by her mother, husband and small son; Dr Faisal Saleem looks at her x-ray that shows her spine to be inoperable, she is paralysed and her arm has a jagged skin graft. It is probable that her husband will wait until they get compensation from the government for her injury and loss of home, he will then remarry and start another family and this wife and child will be cast aside. The challenges are enormous and it is evident that the vulnerable face an uncertain if not dire future if they get through the coming winter.

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