



MONTHLY HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

May 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Urgent Humanitarian Concern: Rise in Food Prices and Forecasted Poor Harvest.
- ❖ Preparation of 2nd Joint Appeal.
- ❖ Launched of Civil-Military Guidelines.
- ❖ Displacement in Helmand Province.

The information contained in this report has been gathered by the Humanitarian Affairs Unit (HAU) from sources including the Government of Afghanistan, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and other sources.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Food security

WFP distributed 14,000 MT of food to 760,000 people across thirteen provinces as part of the *Joint Government of Afghanistan/UN Appeal for the - Humanitarian Consequences of the Rise in Food Prices*. This Program was launched in mid-January to assist 2.5 million Afghans most severely affected with WFP food aid and targeted nutrition support interventions by WHO and UNICEF. Thus far, the outcomes of the Program have been rather mixed. While there have been reports of successful wheat price reduction of up to 25-30% in the areas targeted by the program, its original implementation timeframe (January-June 2008) will be probably affected by a series of constraints, including limited capacity of local authorities charged with the development of FFW projects and the selection of beneficiaries, and interruption of the food pipeline, at national level. As a matter of fact, WFP efforts to procure wheat in the region have come almost to a complete halt as Iran and Kazakhstan recently imposed a ban on wheat exports while Pakistan has not authorized yet WFP to purchase a request for 35,000 Mt forcing WFP to tender out some 30,000 Mt from the international market. As a result, although the appeal is 92% resourced, and 23,000 MT of food has already been dispatched, only about 14,000 MT of food (16% of total) has been actually distributed to about 763,000 beneficiaries (30% of total).

Following a recommendation by UNDGO and ECHA chairs, a Afghanistan Special Food Security Task Force (SFSTF) chaired by the HC and including ADB, WB, IMF, FAO, WFP and UNAMA representatives was established in order to

plan future short, mid and long term food security responses. The SFSTF suggested to launch a second Joint Appeal - ideally before the Paris Conference (12 June) - that should address also nutrition concerns and include short-term emergency agricultural interventions to support farmers with specific late-season crops and seed for the next main planting in the autumn.

Emergency food aid

WFP provided food assistance to 300 flood affected families in Nangarhar and Takhar provinces and 11 MT of emergency food aid to families in Gulran district of Hirat province made ill by a toxic weed known as Charnak.

Iran deportations

95,723 persons have been deported from Iran up until 09 May 2008. UNHCR is providing assistance to the most vulnerable. The significant majority (ca 99%) of deportees continue to be single males, who are mostly economic migrants and who had recently crossed the border illegally in search of employment opportunities.

Returns from Pakistan

Since the beginning of the year up to May 18, the great majority (99%) of returnees – or 96,238 individuals – has arrived from Pakistan. Most are returning from the NWFP urban areas and Jalozai camp. Returnees from Jalozai report that lack of job opportunities and services in proposed relocation sites prompted their return rather than relocation.

While most returnees appear to have managed to return to their places of origin, some returnee families/groups have spontaneously settled in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces and, according

to a recent UNHCR assessment, they are in need of relief aid.

IDPs in Helmand

Ongoing fighting in Garmser district in the southern province of Helmand has resulted in presumably as many as 1,500 families being displaced of which, reportedly, 900 are now in Lashkergah district (Helmand) and 300 in Registan district (Kandahar province). Access to the area by humanitarian agencies remains restricted on security grounds. Following a request for assistance by the local Disaster Management Committee to the United Nations, WFP has already pre-positioned 175 MT of food aid for immediate distribution.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS¹

The over all security situation has worsened during the reporting period. During the month of May 174 civilians were reportedly killed as a result of armed conflict. About 64 percent of the reported casualties killed by AGEs, 30 percent by Afghan Government and international military forces while 6 percent killed by other conflict related causes.

A disturbing development during May is the use of children as suicide bombers or increasing number of children caught up in IED incidents.

OTHER MAJOR PENDING ISSUES/CHALLENGES

Work on the 2nd Joint Appeal aimed at mitigating the Humanitarian Consequences of the Rise in Food Prices has already commenced. However, much analysis of the current and likely future situation, as well as of the response so far, is needed, in order to justify an appeal which could be 50-100% larger than the current one. In particular, a clear picture of the extent cereals harvest will be affected by poor rain fall this year is urgently needed. However, the report of a pre-harvest assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture with FAO support – due for submission, originally, on 10 May – has yet to be released.

The concern of the government on the food security crisis and the impending drought is not reflected in a coherent response, with individual ministries launching initiatives covering only their own concerns, with no reference to the others, let alone coordination or prioritization. An example is a press release from the Ministry of Agriculture issued on May 4 appealing for \$ 2.5 billion to pay for

emergency - including \$ 150 million for food for vulnerable people - and short and medium term programs to increase agricultural production. A second example is the submission to donors by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of a project proposal worth about \$ 1 million to rent water tanks. Following a recommendation of the Afghanistan Special Food Security Task Force (SFSTF), the HC has met on May 20 with Head of the National Emergency Response Commission, Vice President Karim Khalili, to solicit the establishment of a high level Inter-Ministerial Food Security Group for comprehensive and coherent formulation and coordination of relevant policy interventions.

COORDINATION

The Humanitarian Country Team has recommended the establishment of seven Clusters. The HC will formally request the ERC the roll out of these clusters in the coming days.

The Civil-Military guidelines drafted by the Kabul Civil-Military Working Group (NGOs, UN, Donors, Embassies, ISAF and OEF) have been formally launched. DSRSG Asplund has discussed them with Vice President Khalili and Minister of Defense Wardak, both of whom indicated their support for the Guidelines.

At a first Inter-Cluster meeting held in the reporting period, the development of a Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) for Afghanistan was recommended.

A joint OCHA CRD/AO mission to Kabul was carried out 13-20 May to assess HAU capacity, operational and administrative needs.

UPCOMING EVENTS

15-June: Humanitarian Country Team

19-June: Inter-Cluster Coordination Meeting

26-June: Visit of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (from 26/June to the 1/July)

¹ UNAMA Human Rights Report on Protection of Civilians and UNICEF.