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HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES LAUNCH FLASH APPEAL FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED IN NEPAL

(Kathmandu/New York, 25 September 2008): The United Nations and its humanitarian partners issued an appeal today in response to flooding in the east of the country. The appeal seeks \$15.5 million to cover the needs of at least 70,000 people over the next six months.

“We have witnessed the generous response of local communities, who, despite widespread poverty, have helped affected families with food, water, and clothing and who have helped shelter the displaced. I hope that donors will also respond with generous assistance to help communities and local government shoulder this load, and ensure that this humanitarian support continues,” said Robert Piper, Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal. “As it will be many months before these families will be able to go home, their support will prove crucial to stabilize the precarious conditions of the displaced,” he added.

The flooding occurred in eastern Nepal, when the Koshi River, one of the largest river basins in Asia, breached its eastern embankment on 18 August. The force of the water led to 80% of the river changing its course, rendering parts of the flooded areas completely inaccessible. The flooding has severely impacted upon an already vulnerable population. Those displaced by the flooding are currently staying in temporary shelter sites across Sunsari and Saptari districts. There are 61 shelter sites, many of which are schools, and a number of families are also staying in *ad hoc* settlements, including along the river embankment and the east-west highway. A still unknown number of people are residing with host families across both districts, and an undetermined number of Indians from Birpur, Lalpur and Fatehpur in Bihar state have been displaced to Nepal due to floods in Bihar.

Working in close collaboration with the Government, which is leading response operations in each of the affected areas, the humanitarian community in Nepal has prioritised ten sectors in this flash appeal. The appeal includes 6 NGO projects, and 27 UN agency projects.

This response plan comes in addition to Nepal’s \$102 million Transition Appeal for 2008, currently only 44.5% funded. While the Transition Appeal is helping agencies to address chronic problems in Nepal across all sectors, the flood emergency has added acute needs to an already challenging and complex humanitarian environment.

In addition to the disaster in eastern Nepal, incessant rainfall in the mid-western and far-western regions between 19 and 21 September has resulted in more flooding and landslides in eight more districts. More than 30 deaths have been confirmed. Kanchanpur and Kailali districts in the far western region have been particularly hard-hit, with more than 24,000 families affected by flash floods alone.

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