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Photos: FOCUS

Chairman's Message

Welcome to the second issue of the Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) biannual Global Newsletter! The newsletter is a way for FOCUS to stay connected with its key stakeholders by providing them with a synopsis of various initiatives and projects implemented by the FOCUS units worldwide.

Following a year faced with many global challenges, 2010 so far, has been demanding for FOCUS with various disasters it has had to respond to. As the developing world continues to undergo changes due to the economic downturn, a flourish of disasters, and health care emergencies, the need for FOCUS to be at the forefront for disaster and crisis response is increasing. FOCUS aims to fulfil its mandate and vision by striving to continue to work towards being leaders in disaster risk reduction and crisis response in its areas of operations.

I hope you find the articles informative and engaging. I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our donors, partners, volunteers and friends who have helped to actualise and participate in the many projects and interventions we have been involved in.

Warmest regards,
Aziz M. Bhaloo
Chairman

Attabad landslide calls for FOCUS to respond

On 4 January 2010, the Attabad region of the Hunza Valley in Northern Pakistan was victim to a severe landslide. The landslide resulted in the formation of a 22 km long lake, and submerged and damaged the Karakoram Highway cutting off road links with upper Hunza and lower Hunza. The upstream population has been completely cut off from supplies, and many families have been left without food and shelter. The affected community has had difficulty relocating, as the only mode of transportation is by helicopter. FOCUS, in collaboration with the Ismaili Council for Pakistan, Aga Khan Foundation, Aga Khan Health Services, Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, Aga Khan Education

Services, the local government, and the Pakistan army, continues to aid in the crisis by providing food, assistance with evacuation efforts, and managing camps for those affected.

It is anticipated that in mid-August, those who were relocated as a precautionary measure will be able to return home. Unfortunately, the 144

households directly impacted by the landslides in January, and the 240 households that were submerged by the lake formation will continue to remain in relief camps until the situation improves. The Ismaili Councils and FOCUS continue to work collectively to implement recovery plans and monitor the situation closely.



FOCUS volunteers preparing to distribute relief goods to those affected.

Search and Rescue builds capacity

In October 2009, FOCUS Europe, in collaboration with FOCUS India and Rapid UK, implemented a training programme to enhance capacity building in Gujarat, India. Fifteen volunteers recruited by FOCUS India participated in a series of sessions in search and rescue response. Facilitated by members of the FOCUS Europe Search and Rescue Team, the training consisted of two 10-day phases in November and December. The training will build FOCUS India's capacity to

respond to potential disasters locally and nationally. The team can be deployed in the event of a disaster to provide emergency relief, assess the impact of a disaster, and assist rescue workers in their response efforts.

Additionally, in May this year, 20 volunteers were trained in water response and rescue methods to help better prepare for flood situations. Funded by the Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Commission, the

training was conducted over a four-day period, in Kolada, a four hour drive from Mumbai. The trained water response rescue team is now equipped with the essential tools including rescue boats and outboard motors as well as life jackets, helmets, and throw lines, enabling them to respond to future emergencies immediately and effectively.



Following a disaster, participants train to remove a casualty from the rubble.

FOCUS Afghanistan: Responding & Reacting

In April and May this year, the three provinces of Baghlan, Badakhshan, and Samangan experienced the heaviest rainfall in recent years, affecting 817 families. This caused complete or partial damage to houses, land, and crops, and destroyed irrigation canals. In addition, many have been left destitute and in need of food and shelter, and in severe cases, resulted in loss of life. FOCUS Afghanistan in collaboration with the Afghanistan government, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and

Development, and other organisations such as the United Nations, immediately responded by providing non-food items to the families in need. Additionally, assessments were completed to assist in implementing disaster risk reduction strategies for the areas in peril.

FOCUS Afghanistan in conjunction with the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, organised a regional conference on Disaster Management in the Baghlan and Badakhshan provinces. The conference provided an oppor-

tunity to raise awareness and understanding of disasters affecting the provinces as well as discuss issues and challenges, underlining disaster reduction

and response, whilst identifying opportunities for synergy and collaboration among all stakeholders.



FOCUS distributes non food items to those in need.

Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction

FOCUS India in partnership with the Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Commission, Rapid UK, FOCUS Europe, and the Aga Khan

Foundation, implemented a project to provide capacity building training to a group of community members known as the Community Emergency



Members of the CERT team participate in a water rescue training session.

Response Team (CERT). CERT members across 18 project villages and 12 schools, participated in rigorous training including search and rescue methods, fire safety, first aid response, damage assessment, emergency evacuation drills and various hazard mapping and planning activities. Furthermore, to ensure sustainability of the activity, the teachers in each of the 12 schools completed a two-day session on the practical and theoretical

aspects of disaster risk reduction allowing them to train the task force members and the students of their respective schools.

In addition, 27 community members participated in a training session in seismic resilient construction. This team is working to build earthquake resilient model homes in the 18 project villages using the techniques learnt during the training sessions.

Improving the Quality of Life in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is one of the countries most at risk to climate related natural hazards. In an effort to reduce the impact of these disasters, FOCUS in collaboration with the Government of Tajikistan, the United Kingdom's Department of International Development and the Swiss Agency for Development and Coordination, hosted a Regional Climate Resilience Workshop in June, entitled "Fostering Resilience to Remote Geo-Hazards". Attendees included Major Latipov, Head of the Tajik Committee of Emergency Situations and Mahmad Safarov, Director for the Tajik Department of Hydrometeorology amongst other key government officials, donors, and non government institutions. The workshop provided a forum for more than 70 policy makers and scientific practitioners to discuss

and share policies, programmes, and best practices on climate risk resilience and geo-remote hazards.

These discussions will help foster disaster response in such cases as the torrential rains which affected the Eastern part of the Khatlon Province of Tajikistan in spring of this year. The severe floods caused by the rains affected more than 16,000 people, displacing more than 4,500 and claiming at least 40 lives. FOCUS, in coordination with the government of Tajikistan, Oxfam Great Britain, and other emergency management partners, provided blankets, mattresses, and jerry cans to these vulnerable communities.

Fortunately, three seismically retrofitted schools built in collaboration with FOCUS, Aga Khan Planning & Building Services, and the Humanitar-

ian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO), were unaffected and left intact when a powerful earthquake hit the Vanj district of Tajikistan, in January this year. Whilst many homes and buildings were partially damaged or demolished, these schools were able to withstand the tremors due to their unique design and planned construction. For more than 12 years, FOCUS, Aga Khan Foundation, ECHO, and the government of Tajikistan have partnered to foster disaster resiliency management, seeking to improve the quality of life for people in Tajikistan.

Disaster Awareness & Preparedness

In March, FOCUS in North America and the FOCUS International Secretariat participated in the 2010 Conference on Health and Humanitarian Logistics held at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, USA. Experts from institutions such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US Department of Homeland Security, the Clinton Foundation, United States Agency for International Development, the American Red Cross, and FOCUS shared their knowledge on disaster management. This included the planning, preparation, and mitigation of disasters as well as short and long-term humanitarian responses and recovery.

FOCUS in North America also conducted three day Disaster Management Leadership Training Conferences in Houston and Toronto, for its Regional Disaster Management Teams. As a key component of the Disaster Management Programme, the training prepared the managers to effectively respond in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. Participants completed training from experts who were knowledgeable on a number of

hazards pertinent to Australia, Canada, USA and Papua New Guinea. During this training, participants had the opportunity to share best practices and experiences, while trained responders and trainers also shared lessons learned.

Disaster Preparedness Week was also launched in May across the US and in June in New Zealand, Australia, and Papua New Guinea. During the week,

resources were shared which highlighted and taught the importance of being prepared for a disaster. Community members were asked to know the risks of specific hazards in the area, make a plan to react to a disaster or emergency and to practise this regularly, and prepare emergency kits for the home, work and the car. Disaster Preparedness Week will be held in Canada later this year.



FOCUS International Coordinator, Gulam Juma, participated in a panel discussion titled "Education, Community Preparedness and Capacity Building", delivering a presentation on the role of FOCUS, and its work in community disaster preparedness in various parts of the world.

In Remembrance

FOCUS Pakistan's Regional Programme Manager (South), Rahim Khan Rajput, was among the 152 people killed in an unfortunate air accident on the morning of 28 July 2010. Airblue Airbus 321 crashed in a heavily wooded area just outside Islamabad as a result of torrential rains and severe weather conditions. Born in the Multan region of Punjab, Rahim obtained his early education from his native city. He later joined Bahauddin Zakaria University in Multan and obtained a BA degree in Humanities. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, he pursued further education from Karachi University completing a Masters of Education. He was also certified by the Institute of Education at the Aga Khan University in Karachi.

As Regional Programme Manager for FOCUS Pakistan, he provided overall

leadership for organisational activities in Karachi, Sindh and Punjab. He also contributed to the development of the organisational strategy as a member of the senior management team. Deputy Executive Officer, Nusrat Nasab adds: "Rahim had a cheerful personality which enabled him to build strong relations within and outside the organisations he worked for. He was an asset to the FOCUS Pakistan team. He will be missed". Chair of FOCUS Pakistan, Khadija Shaban, expressed her deepest condolences: "It is as though we have lost an arm. Rahim would take on any task - big or small. He was not only a great leader, but a good friend and a mentor to all those who worked with him". With the demise of Rahim, FOCUS lost a committed and energetic leader.

The experience and energy that

Rahim brought to FOCUS Pakistan will always be missed. Rahim was 34 years old at the time of his passing. He leaves behind his wife and one and a half year old son, Sharif.



Rahim Khan Rajput, Regional Programme Manager for FOCUS Pakistan, was among the 152 killed on board the Air Blue flight that crashed the morning of 28 July.

Bike4Life Mali: 25 December 2010 - 3 January 2011

This December the FOCUS challenge is going to the heart of West Africa as the Bike4Life team cycles across the colourful villages and scenic cliff tops of Sub-Saharan Mali. In five days, a distance of approximately 400 km will be covered including visits to some of AKDN's projects such as the magnificent Great Mosque of Mopti recently restored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. By day, the team will cycle along asphalt roads and low to medium gradient bike trails and by night camp under the stars of the African sky.

To find out more information about this latest challenge and to register for an application form, please visit: www.focuschallenge.org



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