

## Humanitarian workers must be protected - not targeted

*18 August 2010* - World Humanitarian Day marked on 19 August is an occasion to pay tribute to the men and women in Afghanistan who work to save the lives and protect the health of those affected by emergencies, whether caused by the ongoing conflict or natural disasters.

Aid workers often work in difficult environments and those who offer their help often put their own lives at risk. This day is also a time to remember humanitarian staff who have lost their lives serving others.

Natural disasters and conflict cause immense suffering for thousands of Afghans every year. We have again been reminded of this with the recent floods in parts of Afghanistan. Humanitarian aid workers strive to ensure that all those who have experienced a traumatic event and need life-saving assistance receive it. Humanitarian workers in Afghanistan provide emergency food, shelter and medical assistance which can mean the difference between life and death for thousands of people every day.



This year has seen an increase in the number of targeted attacks on humanitarian personnel across the world.

According to United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan statistics there have been 47 incidents of direct intimidation of United Nations staff and aid workers between 1 January and 30 June this year. In addition, 19 United Nations staff members and aid workers have been attacked, 63 United Nations staff members and aid workers have been abducted and seven United Nations staff members and aid workers have been killed.

**Robert Watkins, deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations humanitarian coordinator** said: "The United Nations today calls on all parties to the conflict to respect and allow humanitarian aid workers carry out their work. Aid workers operate on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Humanitarian workers must be protected – not targeted. They must have the space to operate without fear in Afghanistan in order to assist the most vulnerable people in this country."



## Selected key humanitarian assistance facts from United Nations agencies:

- Since the start of its voluntary repatriation programme in 2002, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has assisted more than 4.6 million Afghans to return home, making Afghanistan the world's largest returnee-receiving country.
- As of August 16, more than 97,000 Afghan refugees have received assistance from UNHCR to return from Pakistan and Iran so far this year.
- More than 300,000 returnees and internally displaced persons in the first quarter of this year have received reintegration support through a process of community mobilisation, support for community infrastructure, housing, livelihoods, education and health programmes from UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).
- World Health Organization (WHO) this year has reached 7.5 million children under five in each of the first two rounds of its countrywide vaccination campaign. There are four national vaccination campaigns each year.
- The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) aims to feed and provided emergency food assistance to around 7 million people during 2010 in Afghanistan. This includes providing school children with meals to help boost the school enrolment rate and close the gender gap in Afghan classrooms.

## Implementing recommendations to ensure protection of civilians

*17 August 2010* - Since the release last week of the Mid-Year Report 2010 on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, UNAMA's Human Rights Unit has been holding meetings with key stakeholders to discuss implementation of the report's recommendations.

"The recommendations are feasible, doable and practical," said Georgette Gagnon, the unit's director.

"They give practical guidelines to all key actors on how to reduce the terrible toll this conflict has on civilians," she added.

Seven recommendations are to anti-government elements, seven to the international military forces, and four to the Government of Afghanistan on what each should do to protect civilians.

## UN concerned about violent clashes

**14 August 2010 - The United Nations is deeply concerned about yesterday's violent clashes and ongoing tensions in the south and south western areas of Kabul, and the reports of loss of life, injuries and damage to property.**

The United Nations calls on all parties to cease violence, to exercise restraint and to maintain law and order. The United Nations offers its good offices to all parties to assist them in resolving disputes.



### **Afghan, UN officials aim to strengthen accountability at local level**

**15 August 2010 - "One of the major roles of the provincial councils is to make the local government accountable," said Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) representative Omid Sabah at a workshop organized by the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations.**

"The provincial councils need to have a better relationship with the local government," Sabah told an audience of more than 100 participants.

The workshop was attended by heads of provincial directorates, provincial council members, influential clerics, head of villages and political parties in Herat, west of Kabul.

The workshop was designed to improve coordination among local and provincial officials.

It was organized on 9 August by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordination with the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, and funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

By Fraidoon Poya, UNAMA

### **Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission releases list of polling centres**

**18 August 2010 - The Independence Election Commission (IEC) today announced that 5,897 polling centres will be open during the upcoming parliamentary elections or Wolesi Jirga, while approximately 938 polling centres or about 14 per cent of the original total will remain closed.**

The final list of polling centres comes after the IEC reviewed initial proposals from the Afghan National Security Forces.

Last week, Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, called on the IEC to make its list of polling sites available to the public at least one month in advance to ensure the transparency of the electoral process, and to show "a marked difference and progress compared with the same stage of last year's Presidential elections."

A public, final list of polling centres is an important factor in enabling the IEC to keep constant track of all sensitive materials, such as ballot papers, throughout all stages the electoral process and thus reduce the risk of electoral fraud.

Mr Mistura, who is also the head of the UN Mission in Afghanistan, which is providing technical and logistical support to the polls, also noted in his statement the large number of candidates and said he was "particularly encouraged by the active campaigns of women candidates."

Of the 2,500 candidates, more than 400 women are campaigning for the 249 available seats in the Wolesi Jirga.

Noting that security challenges will be a significant obstacle, Mr Mistura urged "heightened vigilance" over the final month before the ballot to ensure a safe electoral process.

Voter registration closed last week with 376,000 people registering as first time voters, particularly youth.

By UNAMA



## UN agencies aid Afghan families affected by regional flooding

**16 August 2010 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on the international community to speed up assistance to Pakistan which is reeling from regional flooding that has also affected thousands of people in Afghanistan.**

The United Nations is working closely with the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (UNDMA) to make sure that the life-saving needs of the neediest are met.

The priority needs include food and safe drinking water, emergency shelter, health-care and non food-items such as blankets, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

More than 3,500 homes throughout Afghanistan are damaged, as well as roads, dams, bridges and agricultural land.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) provided three-month food rations to those affected in the worst hit areas.

Meanwhile, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) dispatched cholera and other health kits, while the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said it plans to procure hand pumps to provide safe drinking water and clothing for children.

In addition, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has been distributing non-food items in the form of tents, blankets, plastic tarpaulins and plastic jerry cans.

"We are much obliged for the UNHCR assistance but we need fundamental assistance, our houses have been badly damaged," said Hakeen Khan who lives in the Robat Returnee Settlement in Gardez, south of Kabul.

More than 10,000 families have been affected by the floods in the province, according to Rehmatullah Sarwary, provincial director of the Rural Rehabilitation Development (RRD).

"The heavy rains and floods destroyed our land, homes and farms, and killed our animals," said Jamaluddin, who also lives in the Robat settlement.

"The Government and international community should assist us," he added.

By Dilawar Khan Dilawar, UNAMA

## Kandahar public works opens new road

**16 August 2010 - A two-lane 650 meter road paved by the Afghan Department of Public Works with support from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is now open in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar.**

Approximately 35 km of road are being paved and reconstructed in different parts of Kandahar, the governor's office told UNAMA.

The Governor said that the paving and rehabilitation of roads in the city is part of the Hamkari, or cooperation plan aimed at improving the lives of the Kandahar community.

"Roads are essential means of communication," Nader Shah Agha, UN-Habitat Director in Kandahar, said at the opening ceremony.

Residents are "very happy" about the road and said that it shows that the Government is fulfilling its responsibilities to provide basic services to its citizens.

"I appreciate that the Government is implementing reconstruction projects in our area," one person said.

Meanwhile, the Public Works Department also completed graveling a separate 5 km road, funded by the Kandahar municipality in Khojak Baba area of Kandahar city.

By Mujeeb Rahman, UNAMA

## UN health organization contributes life saving equipment to Kandahar hospital

**18 August 2010 - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) has contributed US\$ 20,000 worth of ventilators, suction machines and other emergency equipment to the intensive care unit of one the biggest hospitals in Afghanistan.**

"Hundreds of general and conflict-related patients refer to the Mirwais Hospital for treatment on a daily basis," Director of Kandahar Ministry of Public Health, Dr Qayom Pokhla, told local media.

"Every day there is a security incident either in Kandahar or in other parts of the region, and after receiving the equipment, we will be able to reach our requirements more efficiently than before," he added.

Mirwais, a state-run hospital supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), is the only medical centre in the south capable of carrying out complicated surgery.

The WHO's Director in Kandahar, Dr Rahmathullah Kamwak, said the UN agency is committed to providing technical support to the Ministry of Public Health and to build up Mirwais' capacity to serve the significant needs of community with limited resources.

By Mujeeb Rahman, UNAMA