

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR, MR. ROBERT PIPER
PRESENTATION ON NEPAL 2009 HUMANITARIAN TRANSITION APPEAL
3 February 2009
[Check against Delivery]

The Appeal we are sharing with you today represents the strategic action plan and funding request of the humanitarian community in Nepal. It has been elaborated in consultation with victims of disasters, government counterparts, and concerned stakeholders.

The action plan is based on an analysis of needs, compiled from the best available sources. The Needs Analysis Framework document has also been made available.

Despite significant gains in the political transition over the past 4 years, the need for humanitarian assistance has not abated. The majority of Nepal's people are subsistence farmers, with nearly a quarter of the population living on less than US\$ 1 a day. Many households can produce only enough to meet their basic food needs for three months. Lack of adequate roads, market networks, and economic opportunities in remote areas severely limit their capacity to deal with shocks such as localized crop failures, natural disasters, and rising food prices.

This year alone, flooding and landslides have affected an estimated 250,000 people in both the eastern and far-western regions of the country. More than 70,000 people were displaced when the Koshi, the largest river in the country, broke through one of its retaining walls and flooded villages that were in its course.

In addition to chronic vulnerabilities, external shocks like commodity price increases are expected to affect the food security of 6.4 million Nepali people this year. Global acute malnutrition is 13%, a disturbing statistic as this is the only indicator that has worsened over the last seven years.

Key facts and figures

In 2008, donors provided more than US \$ 98 million in humanitarian assistance, as recorded by OCHA's Financial Tracking System. This represents approximately 14% of total ODA to Nepal in 2008, in line with global averages. While some commentators see humanitarian aid as a dilution of resources for long-term poverty alleviation, it is worth noting that while immediate needs are the priority, effective humanitarian assistance can also mitigate the risk of crises driving people into chronic poverty and thus contribute to achieving MDGs and the eradication of poverty. While the primary objective is to assure basic services, humanitarian work contributes to the peace dividend, providing an environment more conducive to resolving the root causes of the conflict.

Humanitarian assistance in 2008 helped to provide life-saving surgical interventions, respond to acute malnutrition, feed more than 1 million people, provide safe water supply to more than 19,000 flood affected families, sustain 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in camps, and provide food, water, shelter, health care, warm clothes to the thousands of flood-displaced.

For 2009, we are appealing for US\$ 115 million to implement projects that have been selected by cluster leads, in consultation with Government line ministries. More than 50% of the appeal is for food security and nutrition; another 20% is to assist the Bhutanese refugees living in camps in eastern Nepal. 69 projects have been submitted by 7 national NGOs, 18 international NGOs, and 10 UN and affiliated agencies to reach an estimated 3.1 million Nepalis in 2009.

As mentioned in my letter to donors, the Appeal focuses on urgent, on-going support needed within the next twelve months to save lives and protect the vulnerable. The caseload includes the chronically food-insecure, refugees on Nepali soil and the legacy of the 2008 flood season. In addition to life-saving activities, the 2009 Appeal seeks support for preparedness measures to be taken in relation to natural disasters, including earthquake risk. It also plans for protection measures to address social cleavages and discrimination among the population so as to avert the potential for future conflict. Preparedness and prevention measures will indeed be essential to help Nepal reduce decisively the vulnerability of its population. Last, the 2009 Appeal introduces a strategy to ensure transition from international to local actors.

Last September, in line with global humanitarian reform initiatives, we formalized the Cluster approach in Nepal. This will help us improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership. Cluster leads are encouraged to ensure that needs assessments, prioritization, and strategic plans are shared with relevant line ministries. I have asked cluster leads to review the projects in the Appeal – among other criteria, projects are selected on the basis of their ability to increase the capacity of local partners, be implemented within 12 months, incorporate elements of risk reduction where possible, and demonstrate linkages with longer term development initiatives.

I urge you to review the Appeal carefully, and look at some of the critical resource gaps that are needed. Today, WFP does not have sufficient resources to meet food aid for relief and recovery activities beyond January 2009 as requested by the GoN. Progress made in creating a more effective, efficient and predictable humanitarian response system is at risk without the appropriate resources for cluster coordination.

I have come to see many of you, in my capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, to advocate for the need to reduce risk, with a view to reducing tomorrow's caseload. I fear that needs in 2009 may be as great as in 2008, as Nepal continues to face great challenges, including the effects of global economic crisis. And it will be the most vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, that will feel these effects most greatly.

The international humanitarian system exists to help governments of affected countries help their own people. In this spirit, the UN and its partners have elaborated the Appeal you have in front of you – to help the most vulnerable and destitute Nepali people survive the coming year, to increase their resilience to future disasters, and to fulfill their rights to live a life with dignity and self-sufficiency.

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