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Chairman's Message

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) biannual Global Newsletter! FOCUS, with the help of its staff, volunteers and donors, continues to make great strides in fostering disaster resilient communities in the areas in which it serves. As each day passes, we cannot help but realise that our world is impacted by disasters, both natural and man-made.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) continues to be a priority for FOCUS globally. As we build capacity to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities, FOCUS will work in collaboration with the Disaster Risk Management Initiative to address all natural disasters, evaluate and where appropriate, redesign the hazard assessment process to embrace global best practices. In addition, FOCUS will leverage the expertise of its partners who work closely with donors, academia, government agencies and civil society to help strengthen capabilities in disaster risk mitigation and preparedness.

Our success relies not only on the quality of work done by our staff and partners, but also on the engagement of donors, volunteers, and friends. Without your support, our efforts would not be sustainable and I would like to thank you all for what you have helped us achieve to date.

This newsletter highlights some of the disaster risk reduction initiatives that we have undertaken during the year. I hope you enjoy it!

Warm regards,

Aziz. M. Bhaloo

FOCUS International Coordinating Committee

Preparing Children for Earthquakes in Pakistan

When a disaster strikes, the primary concern is often the safety of our family, in particular our children. It is essential for our children to learn safety measures to protect themselves in the event of a crisis. FOCUS Pakistan recently acquired an earthquake simulator with funding provided by the European Commission, which helped thousands of students in Gilgit-Baltistan familiarise themselves with the tremors that are felt during an earthquake.

The earthquake simulation exercise comprised of an interactive training session aimed at raising awareness of natural hazards and emphasizing the importance of the precautionary measures that children require when at home or at school. The simulator

is a computerised machine that can automatically or manually be adjusted to create different levels of "tremors" equal to the shocks produced by earthquakes measuring up to 7.8 in magnitude. In Danyore, a town located close to Gilgit, school children had the opportunity to "feel the shocks" whilst on the simulator, as described by Hina Jan, a grade six student.

Officials from the Ministry of Education attended these simulations in support of FOCUS' efforts to build awareness amongst school children. As FOCUS continues to foster disaster resilient communities and better prepare children in the event of a disaster, the earthquake simulation exercise will be replicated in other districts of Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral and Karachi.



Students participate in an earthquake simulation exercise

Building Partnerships in Disaster Risk Reduction

In 2009, the Ismaili Imamat formed partnerships with the State of Texas through the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) and the State of California through the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA). The aim of these partnerships is to strengthen institutional capacity in disaster preparedness and response.

In February this year, 38 members from the Regional Disaster Management Teams (RDMTs) and representatives from FOCUS Canada and USA

attended a state-of-the-art disaster management training designed for emergency responders at Disaster City, which is part of TEEX. In addition, the “collapsed structure staging” provided participants with a real-life scenario and an opportunity to strengthen essential skills such as, understanding response systems, disaster communications, search tactics, emergency operations, incident command system and damage assessment. The training provided a forum for interactive discussions on lessons

learned and best practices. As part of the agreement of cooperation with the State of California, Cal EMA and AKDN’s Disaster Risk Management Initiative (DRMI) have partnered to exchange best practices, technologies, and collaboration to improve the planning and response capacity of FOCUS, AKDN, governmental and civil society partners in their areas of operation. In June 2011, FOCUS Canada and USA attended a training course delivered by Cal EMA’s training branch the California Specialized Training

Institute (CSTI). The curriculum covered an introduction to earthquakes, components of the Incident Command System, and practical exercises through a simulation of an Emergency Operating Centre. A total of 42 participants with a diverse range of expertise took part in the programme. Moving forward, FOCUS and DRMI will work in partnership with CSTI to develop a modified training programme to meet the disaster planning and response needs of FOCUS and AKDN units in South and Central Asia.

North America: Disaster Preparedness through Community Engagement

FOCUS in North America has been working to build stronger relationships with disaster specialists from the State of California to strengthen the capacity of its volunteers and staff. FOCUS provided Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to groups of volunteers on regional hazard awareness, disaster fire suppression techniques, medical operations, light search and rescue operations, incident command system, disaster psychology and security aware-

ness. The CERT concept, which is to provide basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills, was developed and implemented by the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985 and later expanded by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1994. CERT Unit Commander, Captain Stacy Gerlich, was one of the trainers and brought with her over 25 years of experience. Stacy was also one of the responders for the 2001 World Trade Center disaster, amongst other disasters.



Captain Stacy Gerlich demonstrates the technique of controlling severe bleeding

India: Taking Readiness to the Next Level

To accurately meet the multi-dimensional needs of affected communities in a disaster, FOCUS India has taken on new initiatives such as the formation of a Disaster Assessment Response Team (DART), a Search and Rescue Team

(SART), and the implementation of a Hospital Safety Initiative.

A comprehensive situational assessment helps to ensure appropriate resource allocation during a disaster. Across the country, the DART has

13 members trained in needs assessment, logistics, radio operations, emergency response planning and management. Timely response to save lives is imperative in crisis situations, resulting in the need for a well-trained SART. This team, also comprised of 13 members, underwent a rigorous selection and training process by experts from RAPID UK, an internationally renowned search and rescue organisation.

Because disasters create an increased need for healthcare services, hospitals need to ensure that appropriate

systems are in place to cope with such demands. The Prince Aly Khan Hospital in Mumbai plays a critical role in providing emergency healthcare in the event of both man-made and natural disasters. To enhance preparedness and meet these demands, FOCUS India, in collaboration with Public Health Foundation of India, launched the Hospital Safety Initiative in 2010. The project, now in its second phase, aims to strengthen the existing infrastructure and facilities to complement the current preparedness and readiness level of the hospital.



SART casualty transportation training exercise

Project PAMIR: Increasing Resilience of Vulnerable Communities

Afghanistan is a landlocked and mountainous country. The Pamir Mountains, which straddles Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan, are comprised of high-elevation U-shaped valleys. Its major fault line falls predominantly in the Gorno-Badakhshan province, Tajikistan and Badakhshan province, Afghanistan. A typical village along the Pyanj River -- which forms the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan -- is surrounded by mountain slopes which are prone to rock falls, avalanches, debris flows, floods and earthquakes.

Due to the effects of climate change, communities also face the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods as a result of the melting glaciers. FOCUS, in close collaboration with Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan, Hilfswerk Austria, and the University of Baku, Vienna, is in the process of implementing a three-year project titled "Poverty Alleviation through Mitigation of Integrated high mountain Risk" (PAMIR). This project aims to increase the resilience of communities living in mountainous and high-risk



Lake Shewa, a landslide-induced lake in the Afghan Arakht River Valley, Pamir Mountains geographical areas in order to save lives, enable sustainable livelihoods and assist in developing the economy within the target areas of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Tajikistan: Public and Private Sectors Collaborate on DRR Initiatives

In April, FOCUS in Tajikistan hosted a conference under the auspices of the DIPECHO VI project, which is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department's disaster preparedness programme in Central Asia. FOCUS has been an implementing partner of the DIPECHO project since its inception to the region in 2003.

The workshop brought together representatives -- from the private and public sectors involved in disaster management -- to address the importance of building partnerships to strengthen disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives. Private companies included those from the mobile communication sector, a number of local and national hotel and tourism outlets, construction firms, and an Association of Entrepreneurs. The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoESCD) and the provincial Hydro-meteorological Station were in attendance, from the

public sector amongst other organisations. The workshop highlighted the importance of corporate social responsibility, philanthropy, and public-private partnerships. Additionally, the establishment of monetary endowment funds as a means of resource mobilisation and co-financing disaster preparedness and response activities was also explored. As a result of the workshop, a number of public private partnerships relating to DRR in

which FOCUS is taking a facilitating role are under consideration or underway. One such relationship is with *Khushkor*, a printing house in Khorog. *Khushkor* has collaborated with the Department of Education, in a programme in which students design and print posters for classrooms across Badakhshan, highlighting prominent natural hazards and preventative measures to increase disaster resiliency. Another partnership that has been developed is with the

telecommunications company Tcell, which has partnered with the CoESCD to produce a DRR crossword-activity to be incorporated into several newspapers that reach a readership of over 12,000 in the Gorno-Badakhshan region. This will help raise awareness on disaster preparedness within the local community.



Workshop participants, organisers and presenters from the private and public sector

In Memorial: Safo Rajabov



Late Safo Rajabov, Procurement Officer
FOCUS Tajikistan

Safo Rajabov, Procurement Officer with FOCUS Tajikistan, passed away on 24 May 2011 due to a cerebral hemorrhage. He was born on 25 October 1974, in Khorog City of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region in Tajikistan. Safo was hardworking and determined to make his

mark. In 2001, Safo moved to Dushanbe to join the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development as a Logistics Assistant. Later in 2004, he joined the International Foundation for Electoral System as a Programme Manager, and in June 2005 he commenced with FOCUS Tajikistan as a Procurement

Assistant, subsequently promoted as Procurement Officer.

FOCUS extends its condolences to Safo's family. Safo will be dearly missed by all.

Bikers Unite to Save the World One Hill at a Time

Bike4Life 2010, held in the breath taking Atlas Mountains, Morocco, North Africa, saw 57 participants from five countries come together for the annual FOCUS Challenge. The six-day trip comprised of cycling 300km and camping in freezing temperatures by night and climbing 200m-high hills by day. The team travelled along the rocky undulating roads of Ouarzazate, southwest of Marrakech, a rugged course that proved to be more challenging than anticipated. The group ranged from 17 to 65 years of age with varying abilities, each united in their

quest to each raise thousands of dollars for FOCUS, in what was a gruelling and emotionally testing adventure. Anar Sajoo, a Canadian born UK resident said, *"For all the pain and physical discomfort, I wouldn't have wanted it any other way! This was a sacrifice I needed to make for myself and for those in need."* Bike4Life reached its climax on New Year's Eve when the group cycled in unison across the finish line, all of them relieved to have conquered this epic journey with their newfound friends.



Bike4Life 2010 Organising Team. From left: Zaheer Hirani, Noorez Nasser, Farhann Cachra, Faiz Mitha, Shahzil Mohamed and Leila Ratnani

The 2011 FOCUS Challenge is a hike up Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, East Africa. Participants will embark in an experience of a lifetime in aid of FOCUS from London on December 25, 2011 for a five day trek up the 19,340 feet mountain, reaching the peak on New Year's Day 2012!

Applications are due to open soon. Please register your interest for this year's challenge at: www.focuschallenge.org.

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An Affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network

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