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## Pakistan: Greater Attention Needed to Urban Reconstruction

Reconstructing the urban areas of Pakistan affected by the October 8 earthquake presents an array of challenges to the Government of Pakistan and its partners.

Urban recovery efforts will last many years and will result in serious and continued displacement and inequities in the lives of those from urban areas. The Government of Pakistan's Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) is slowly recognizing this reality, but has not yet begun a comprehensive planning process to address it. Progress in the design and implementation of urban reconstruction programs has lagged seriously behind that of their rural counterparts, and to the degree it exists at all, reflects far less participation of local residents and officials. Concentrating on the less challenging rural reconstruction allows ERRA to show immediate results, as opposed to the longer term efforts required to make a visible difference in urban areas. While this approach may serve to deflect the mounting political pressure on ERRA to demonstrate success in advance of the upcoming national elections, the needs of the urban and rural displaced must share equal priority in the recovery effort.

The lives and livelihoods of an estimated 3.2 million people were affected by the earthquake that struck northern Pakistan on October 8, 2005. A November 2005 assessment done jointly by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank found 400,000 homes damaged or destroyed. Recent estimates suggest that there may be as many as 500,000 damaged or destroyed dwelling units. Estimates of the number of individuals displaced approach three million.

Approximately 90 % of the destroyed or damaged housing stock is in rural areas. The remaining ten percent are in urban areas, primarily the towns of Muzaffarabad and Balakot. While the total number of homes destroyed is only ten percent of the pre-earthquake total, urban dwellers represent 20% of all individuals displaced by the earthquake.

Balakot was almost totally destroyed, and will not be rebuilt in its former location along a major earthquake fault line. This will require its complete relocation, and will result in long-term displacement for its almost 30,000 former inhabitants. Long-term displacement from the cities of Muzaffarabad and Balakot alone could approach 90,000 people.

ERRA recently published its twenty-two page policy on rural housing reconstruction, outlining in some detail its strategy in areas such as financial assistance, training, and technical assistance. To date no such document exists for urban reconstruction. This absence of guidelines had left local governments, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, and local residents in a state of confusion, and has significantly impeded progress toward re-establishing urban livelihoods.

The World Bank, through its national partner, the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), has already committed US\$100 million to provide rural home-owner compensation and reconstruction and infrastructure assistance in thirty-four union councils. National organizations, such as the Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation and the Sungi Development Foundation, have been assigned to specific union councils, and have already begun the process of community organizing and rebuilding, using earthquake-resistant methods. Again, no such initiatives have begun in urban areas. The government is in conversations with donor countries interested in urban reconstruction. Local residents and those displaced from the urban areas do not appear to be included in these discussions.

It is likely that different donors will seek and be granted responsibility for the rehabilitation of specific urban areas.

Through the United Nations Action Plan, some international organizations are seeking and receiving funding for a variety of projects that might well put them in opposition to subsequent work funded by these donors. This could lead to confusion, inefficiency, and potential disparities if not properly coordinated and monitored by ERRA.

While discussions have begun on how to manage the “residual caseloads” for urban and other areas, it is clear that significant work must be done to address the needs of those requiring longer term support, particularly the former residents of Balakot. A current plan calls for turning over camp management to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) beginning in October 2006, which, if poorly planned and executed, could place the long-term welfare of urban residents and other residual caseload families in jeopardy. Lessons from previous humanitarian disasters suggest that the establishment of transitional camps for housing should be approached with caution, given the challenges of maintaining the necessary level of support over the long term.

Reliance on pledges of future financial assistance, rather than cash on hand, must be avoided, since sustainable relocation requires a consistent level of services over the entire transitional period. Funding sufficient to provide essential support over the anticipated life cycle of the camps should be identified and set aside now. Constant monitoring and evaluation of the relocation program should take place to insure that the camps do not turn into semi-permanent, de facto villages, with little or no capacity for self-sufficiency. ERRA should explore creative ways to encourage the resettlement of the displaced into communities less affected by the earthquake. Incentives for both the displaced and the receiving community should be considered, and might include relocation compensation for the individual and the community, with the latter compensated for the added costs of providing services for those relocated.

A wide array of urban issues remains to be addressed : where to relocate the city of Balakot; where to relocate the 35 % of the residents of Muzaffarabad that will be displaced for the short term and longer; how to appropriately gather and dispose of massive amounts of earthquake rubble in a safe and environmentally sound manner; and how to meet the housing, economic, educational, medical, and psycho-social needs of the urban residents and displaced over the years needed to complete the reconstruction.

## REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDS:

- ❑ The Government of Pakistan and donor governments immediately undertake to identify the

unique economic, psycho-social, environmental, and infrastructure requirements for urban reconstruction. The Government must develop guidelines, policies and procedures to address both immediate and longer term issues. The needs of the urban and rural displaced must share equal priority in planning and program implementation.

- ❑ ERRA identify a range of options to meet the needs of the longer term displaced, and not simply rely on the establishment of camps. Funding sufficient to provide essential support over the anticipated life cycle of the camps should be identified and set aside now. Financial assistance to both the displaced and the community taking them in should be considered as a way of creating incentives and supporting any additional infrastructure that would be needed to accommodate the new arrivals.
- ❑ Drawing on the many qualified professionals in Pakistan, ERRA immediately establish a separate urban reconstruction group consisting of experts in such areas as urban planning, housing, mixed residential/business economic development, public works (roads, sanitation, etc.), environment, and urban renewal.
- ❑ Following the example of the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, which recently funded the secondment to ERRA of an engineer with extensive experience in urban disaster response and mitigation, donors explore additional opportunities to fill critical gaps in existing ERRA capabilities.
- ❑ ERRA, working with the local governments, identify specific urban reconstruction projects and establish a clear management structure for each. Decision-making power must be pushed to the lowest level possible, and, when exercised, must include the views of those individuals and organizations at the local level affected by the earthquake.

*Director of Operations Michael McIntyre and consultant Timothy G. Connolly visited earthquake-affected areas of Pakistan in April. Their mission was supported in part by a grant from Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug). RI is solely responsible for the findings and recommendations of this bulletin.*