

12TH Sept. 2010

Report From The Field From Sindh

By **Dr. M. A. Arif**, Secretary General, Pakistan Pediatric Association,

I took the opportunity to go to the areas of Thatta and surroundings on last Saturday, 4th September. On 05th September I went to visit Sukkur, surrounding areas and Ghotki and surrounding areas with Prof. Mumtaz Lakhani who accompanied me. Both traveled on our own expense.

Before going to these areas, we had sent by TCS to Hyderabad, and Sukkur, courtesy free service arranged with Proctor & Gamble, medicines, infant food items and water coolers (**some details given later in this report**) mostly Glucose biscuits and milk packs, (there is no clean water to use milk powder, neither we wanted to give Breast milk substitutes). For Thatta/ Sajawal I and Medical students of Jinnah Medical College traveled in my car. We took water coolers, infant nutritional products and medicines, drips etc with us in the van supplied free by Proctor & Gamble, which was following us. For Ghotki again, we took the supplies with us with the P & G Van following us. Dr. Kaleemullah gave us his own car to go to Ghotki. He and Dr. Majeed Memon accompanied us in the Sukkur area. The supplies with us included purchases of about 350,000/- collected by PPA and Jinnah Medical College, Karachi and many drugs donated by PPA members.

The report relates to children only where it is necessary to state general conditions, and the relief activities by PPA.

Thatta, Sujawal, Chauhar Jamali : Vast areas have been ravaged in last 4-5 days, They are under 6-8 feet of water though Thatta city itself and the historical Makli GraveYard and areas around Makli are safe so far.. All mud houses and thatched huts have been wiped out. Most of the brick houses in the area have either been destroyed or their ground floors are submerged so they are non habitable. Fortunately people got sufficient notice to save their lives, but in most cases not their assets or farm animals. This is deplorable as the floods started around 29th July 2010 in the high lands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is not a secret that river Indus flows down to Punjab and onwards to Sindh until it falls in the Arabian Sea at a little distance from the Karachi coast. **So why were they not given sufficient warning at least to save their moveable assets and farm animals ?** With Khyber Pakhtunkhwa already flooded, the continuing heavy rains in the highlands, and added rains in the plains, was it not obvious that the flood will also travel down stream.? Then why people were not notified in time to migrate to safer places much earlier than the previous nights? **Surprising ?** And what happened to the 1st and second line of dykes along the river course, which are said to be strengthened every year at a huge cost? I will not go into details or speculations and rumors.

Any way these recent victims of floods are perhaps the worst sufferers. There has not been proper supply of tents so far. While there are some tent sites for those who fled as soon as they heard the news of advancing flood waters, but the majority is sitting by the major road sides. They usually have either a sheet secured with sticks at 45 degrees angle or a 'charpoy' (woven bed without mattress) tilted above them. Many are simply sitting near bushes. Children are mostly sitting in the hot sun, semi naked or naked. It is very unusual to see shoes on their feet or a pair of clean clothes.

FINDINGS

- **SOCIAL:** Displaced from homes and hearths, with sense of deprivation and poverty, (when some of them were not so poor before floods), living without proper shelter. They are worried about their houses and assets. They have virtually no belongings, even like glasses for drinking water, plates for eating and cooking utensils. They had obviously not bathed for days. Most of the kitchen or house hold utensils and itmes have been left behind in a hurry or

washed away by floods. There is no fire, no means of cooking. Another big problem was, at times, people mobbing or plundering the supply vans in desperation or due to indiscipline or at times greed. Some voluntary workers got rough treatment by them due to this behaviour.

- **WATER & SANITATION:** There is no regular potable water supply of any kind, no pit latrines. Water is supplied irregularly either by NGOs or some tankers hired by Govt. when these IDPs rush and crowd to get water for their families, mostly for drinking. Defaecation is mostly behind bushes or in the dark in open ground. They also have no pots for storing water.
- **NUTRITIONAL:** Mostly two meals a day were being provided by the Govt. and NGOs, though many complained of not getting it or they being insufficient. All meals supplied was adult spicy food or rice in some form. Definitely children under 3 were not able to eat it and those around 9 months to 18 months, if not breast fed, were getting very poor or no nutrition worth the name.
- **MEDICAL:** There are many illnesses rampant. Commonest and worst was diarrhea. We have seen Typhoid, Cholera, severe Dysentery, Malaria, Scabies, pustular skin infections and conjunctivitis. Then the cases of acute chest infections apart from cases of pre existing illnesses now left without treatment.

SUKKUR AND SURROUNDINGS

On the whole conditions were better than Thatta area. There were many large tent sites, the tents being provided by UNHCR, UNICEF, NGOs etc. However now, after so many days, many families were scattered along roads and along canal banks, again some in unsatisfactory shelters but most without shelters.

Here Dr. Yunis Bhatti's (one of active PPA Members) Bhatti Hospital on Air port Road, had been opened to them as free 100 pt hospital with often 3 patients on a bed, free OPD/Emergency clinics round the dock, and free medicines. Dr. Yunis Bhatti was all praise for the citizens of Sukkur and the NGOs who were, in addition to his own supplies, giving him adequate quantity of medicines and food. We saw nearly 50 children on drips, some very severely dehydrated.

Another of our worthy members, Dr. A. Majeed Memon, was working for PPA as well as for PIMA and doing a lot of relief and treatment work in the temporary IDP settlements/clusters. Dr. Kaleemullah is working on behalf of PPA for relief and also as coordinator for Sukkur.

In the nearby area of Khairpur, I got excellent reports about relief work by our PPA member, Dr. Aijaz Gajjani with his colleagues. I was also informed that Prof. Saifullah Jamro was looking after Shikarpur at that time, also using the facilities provided by Dr. Zeenat Issani's Hospital.

GHOTKI

It took us about 2 hours to reach Ghotki from Sukkur. The P & G free van followed us with our supplies. Dr. Lutfullah Kalwar, our worthy member and local pediatrician in Civil Hospital, Ghotki is doing excellent job. The wards were full of mostly diarrhea cases, some severely dehydrated. He has now opened another ward (previously MCH ward) of 3 – 4 rooms for pediatric admissions. His catchment area includes the area lying between Ghotki and Kashmore, where all "Kacha areas (areas near the river bank) are under water and surrounding areas are badly flooded. He is getting 50-60 children who have a degree of dehydration needing urgent drips and about 150 children daily in the outpatient department. Here the NGOs and Civil Society is not reaching and he is getting nothing from non Govt. sources except from PPA which had earlier also sent him supplies. He is desperately in need of para medical staff, additional doctors (he has no subordinate doctors), cannulae (size 24) giving sets and drips, particularly Ringo Lact –D. He also needs all types of medicines specially antimalarial injections as well as syrups/ tablets and drugs for other illnesses. He also needs nutritional products for children of all ages as well as clothes for children.

OTHER FLOODED AREA OF SINDH: Many other cities and agricultural areas of Sindh have been flooded but I can not give first hand report as I have not visited them yet. I am trying to get reports from those areas.

NEW AREAS FLOODED ALREADY OR UNDER IMMINENT THREAT

After my visit to these areas, other areas have been flooded, which fall in the Kotri Barrage (Ghulam Mohammad Barrage) area and the canals coming out of this barrage. There are also imminent dangers from the big lakes in Sindh, the worst from Manchar Lake in Dadu which is about to breach its banks. These lakes have over swollen due to flood water draining into them from Indus river and can start flooding any time. The areas under threat, some already flooded, are Mehar, Dadu, surroundings of Sehwan Sharif, Khairpur Nathan Shah.

FLOODS IN OTHER PARTS OF PAKISTAN: Along with this report I am also circulating a write up by Prof. Z. A. Bhutta and Shiriin Bhutta published on 20th August 2010. There is also a very useful map with it of the affected areas. These show the flooded areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), including Swat, and Punjab and some area of Sindh. However, as you can see in that report and the map, the flood waters had not reached Kotri Barrage and beyond by that time. In fact even some areas down stream from Guddu Barrage and before Kotri Barrage were not flooded by that time. A large spread of these areas is now already flooded. Furthermore, the areas of KPK and Punjab, from where the flood water has receded or receding, are presenting the second phase of the disaster i.e. flood related infectious diseases, people scattering back towards their home areas, where there are almost no houses, but worse, even no camps and they are spreading thin in such manner that providing them relief will be even more difficult Logistically.

IN NUTSHELL PAKISTAN HAS NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH FLOODS BEFORE AND INDEED THE WHOLE WORLD HAS RARELY SEEN SUCH CATASTROPHY IN A SINGLE COUNTRY. THE RECENT EXAMPLES IN HISTORY ARE NO MATCH TO IT.

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NOTE: Please see separate write up about proposals and recommendations for short term and long term for future action by PPA.