

Oxfam launches response to devastating disaster in Leh and appeals for your support

~ Oxfam to partner with Centre for Food Security and Sustainable Development in Ladakh (CENSFOOT) and Rural Development and You (RDY) to offer help to 9 villages - Nang, Stakmo, Choglamsar (Tashi Gyatsal), Phyang, taru, Umla, Nimoo, Basgo and Ney ~

New Delhi, August 13, 2010: With winter fast approaching and temperatures likely to dip to freezing degrees, those who have been rendered homeless run the risk of losing their lives if shelter is not provided to them immediately. Shelter options need to be worked out keeping in mind the fact that normal tarpaulin sheets will not help the flash flood survivors tide over the winter ides.

This has been revealed in an assessment carried out by Oxfam India in Leh by a two-member team which toured the affected villages to detail out the impact of flash floods in the area on August 5. It also looked at the condition of men and women in relief camps opened by the Government. As per their report, the other priorities that have emerged are drinking water, health and hygiene and bathing cubicles. “Shelter has emerged as the single most important priority in Leh,” says Nisha Agrawal, CEO, Oxfam India. “Since most of the houses and other infrastructure has collapsed and with winter fast approaching, there is a very brief window of opportunity in which we can help to rebuild the shelter and lives of people devastated by the cloudburst. We appeal to all of you to support us in this process.”

Based on the assessment report, Oxfam India has decided to reach out to 2000 families in nine villages including some of the worst affected ones like Choglamsar, Saboo and Tashi Gyatsal. “The district administration in Ladakh has been very proactive in responding to the needs of the flood affected in the region. However, given the remote access and the limited relief stocks, the administration is relying heavily on the Indian Army and the Indo Tibetan Border Police for help. People in many villages have complained that they are not getting sufficient amount of food, safe drinking water and adequate shelter. We have therefore decided to reach out to as many affected people as possible in the relief camps”, said Ms. Agrawal.

The other villages where Oxfam India would be working are Nang, Stakmo, Phyang, Taru, Umla, Nimoo, Basgo and Nay. The package of relief services will be offered through two local non-government organizations – Centre for Food, Security and Sustainable Development (CENSFOOT) and Rural Development and You (RDY).

In terms of shelter, the army has provided people with tents at distant hillocks but by mid-October winter would set in and the temperatures by mid Nov and Dec would dip to -30 degrees centigrade. This would mean that the shelter support would have to address the use of thermal conditions within the shelters. Oxfam India has brought in a shelter specialist from Redr to carry

out a detailed shelter assessment and provide specifications for shelter design, which would be quick to build, cost effective and easy to make.

Another pressing need for people in relief camps is drinking water. People presently have to walk long distances to fetch water. ``Water is being provided by the administration but at the same time there is a shortage. Oxfam has installed a water purifier system to provide safe drinking water and meet the shortfall,” said Mr. Zubin Zaman, Humanitarian Response Manager, Oxfam India. ``Oxfam is planning to provide sanitation facilities to people living in camps.”

The damage that has occurred to the irrigation canals/small channel that feed into the agricultural field in the villages has emerged as another major area of concern. In Ladakh, 90% of agriculture is irrigated. Without these canals / or small channels people would be left without a livelihood and this would increase food insecurity. ``There is an urgent need to repair the village irrigation canals as quickly as possible to secure people’s livelihoods,” said Mr. Zaman

About Oxfam India

Oxfam India is a newly created Indian non-governmental organization integrating the 60-year-old India operations of 6 separate International Oxfam affiliates working in the country. It came into being on 1 September, 2008 with an Indian staff and an Indian board.

It is a member of Oxfam International, which is a global confederation of 14 Oxfams (Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Netherlands, Quebec, Spain, and the US). Two new Oxfams are currently forming including India and Japan.

The Oxfams are rights-based organizations that fight poverty and injustice by linking grassroots programming (through partner NGOs) to local, national and global advocacy and policy-making. All of Oxfam’s work is framed by our commitment to five broad rights-based aims: the right to a sustainable livelihood, the right to basic social services, the right to life and security, the right to be heard and the right to equality: gender and diversity.

Oxfam India's vision is to create a more equal, just, and sustainable world. The overarching vision of Oxfam India is ``right to life with dignity for all“. Oxfam India will fulfill its vision by empowering the poor and marginalized to demand their rights, engaging the non poor to become active and supportive citizens, advocating for an effective and accountable state and making markets work for poor and marginalized people.

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