

NEELUM VALLEY NEWS

Update on the work of the Murshid Hospital & Health Care Trust following the 8 October 2005 earthquake in Northern Pakistan and Kashmir – on the Web at www.lopo.org.uk/news

21 November 2005: Issue 2

Welcome to the second issue!

The first issue of Neelum Valley News set the scene! Now we can report on some of the work being done in the earthquake area by our friends and colleagues “on the ground.”

It has become even clearer that the best way to be effective is to allow those who know the area well to do what is needed. The Murshid Trust has been very active and is already delivering critical supplies to those who need them most and they are also doing operations in the hospital to help those severely injured.



The extent of the disaster is still only just becoming clear. So much more will need to be done over the coming months. The response to the tsunami only a few months ago was magnificent. The response to this disaster is, sadly, significantly less – maybe because it is in a relatively unknown area of the world, or maybe there are wider political issues. The people in Northern Pakistan are suffering and dying: they need help now and we are trying to raise

awareness and funds. Your support and help is critical and, of course, welcomed.

Road head established

By 17 November 2005, the logistics were in place for our relief efforts on the ground to start in earnest.

A 40 by 20 foot winterised tent has been erected in Muzaffarabad (3.5 hours from Islamabad) to act as a warehouse. The tent has the necessary support facilities (furniture, furnishings and rations for staff) and has been established in conjunction with Islamic Relief. From there, it is another four hour drive by jeep to the forward camp at Dohulian.

Twenty hardy trekkers from the local tribal area (with past experience of disaster relief operations) have been recruited to work with us and the IR team to deliver rations beyond the road head to villages in Neelum directly. This continues to be the key obstacle for many other NGOs who have reached the road head, but are unable to reach the needy villagers.

Supplies already reaching affected villages by Human Chain

The roads to the Neelum Valley will not be open to vehicles until well after the winter.

Yesterday's report by satellite phone from the Valley said that the road was blocked by landslides and that the going was extremely difficult. A chain

of supply has been set up, taking 15kg packages as far as possible by lorry, then transferring to mule train and then to human porters over the last miles.

At this time, the first 25 ton shipment (amounting to 1562 packages) has been carried from Islamabad to the road head. The experienced trekkers are already carrying the packages on. Delivery of rations to the affected villagers has begun!

Essential supplies

The critical 15kg packages are filled with essential supplies for the villagers that are cut off from the outside world. The contents has been formulated in consultation with Doctors and experienced survival experts.

Each pack costs just under £10 for the contents and transport to get it from Islamabad into the hands of the villagers. The packs contain: atta (flour), Channa daal, ghee, powdered milk, sugar, salt, red chillies, tea, candles and matches.

London fund-raising update

The concert being organised by the London Orpheus Philharmonic Orchestra (on 22 November at 19:30 in St Botolph's, EC3) is going well.

Support has been obtained from many sources –messages from Michael Palin, the Lord Mayor and the High Commissioner – and media interest. Donations are coming in (details at www.lopo.org.uk/pk) and we hope that it will be a sell out on the night!

Recent Work at the Hospital

The Murshid Trust is working on many fronts to help those affected by the earthquake. Plans are in place for

long-term relief (such as appropriate low-cost housing, schools and infrastructure) and medium-term work (such as resettlement and medical treatment).



The most severely hurt are already being treated and at the end of October, a C130 plane carried 34 wounded people from Islamabad to Karachi. Fourteen people with varying diagnoses were admitted to the hospital immediately, including one three year old boy. After treatment (above) he will be fine and able to start school next year – when we build one for him to attend – local schools were wiped out in the quake and thousands of children killed (500 out of 700 in just one school).



A young girl was hit by a stone that fell on her smashing her jaw. Plastic surgeon, Dr Tahir Shafi (FRCS, trained in the UK) removed a skin flap from her shoulder and grafted it so that, when it heals, you will not see the difference.