

HUMAN APPEAL INTERNATIONAL – PAKISTAN

HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

Emergency – News Bulletin

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1. MALNUTRITION IN THARPARKAR

Pakistan ranks 146th in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) report 2013. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) situational report 2014, District Tharparkar ranks the lowest in the Human Development Index calculations for the nation's districts and facing extreme drought situation¹. Arid areas of the world are always prone to famines whenever the average annual rainfall is less than 250mm. The Tharparkar region of Sindh, which has climatic and ecological conditions similar to the Indian state of Rajasthan's portion of Thar, faces severe droughts for two to three years in every 10-year cycle. But droughts and famines are not new for the people of the region. Old-timers in the area are witness to the misery and death wrought by the droughts and famines of 1951, 1968, 1969, 1987 and 1988. Similarly, the destruction and death in the famines of 1899 and 1939 are also remembered in Thar and Rajasthan, when there was not a single drop of rain throughout the years.



These areas have been witnessing famine-like conditions for ages. The average annual rainfall is less than 250mm, which is usually uneven and erratic. The sandy arid area with high wind velocity has indeed a fragile ecosystem. If its vegetative cover is overexploited and marginal lands on the slopes of sandy dunes are brought under cultivation, the area will turn into a barren desert.

During the last couple of years, more than 500 children died due to malnutrition in the district. Resultantly, malnutrition became quite evident for human and animals alike. As per HAI – Pakistan assessment there is stunting prevalence of malnutrition in children under the age of five in Sindh is 49.8 percent. Another survey reported anemia levels at 72.5 percent, while 40.5 percent children were underweight; anemia in pregnant and lactating women was estimated at 60.7 percent². Women in Islam Kot are confronted with serious malnutrition problems.

¹ Haroon Jamal, Amir Jahan Khan, Trends In Regional Human Development Indices - Social Policy And Development Centre

² Pakistan – National Nutrition Survey 2011, Pakistan Medical Research Council (PMRC), Nutrition Wing, Ministry of Health, Pakistan

1.1 Current Issue

The Tharparkar region is one of the most vulnerable areas of the country. It has not seen proper rain for three years. The government has not declared Tharparkar as drought hit area. The calamity has taken toll on people and livestock. As per the local media reports 69 percent of hospitals including dispensaries are dysfunctional and presenting look of haunted houses.

The death toll in the desert district of Tharparkar rose to 72 children in two months (34 in the last 11 days only) because of rising rates of pneumonia and malnutrition³. With severe drought now stretching into its fourth year in Tharparkar, it is the children who are bearing the brunt of the winter crisis.

During the last week, over 230 children were brought to the Rural Health Centre of Islamkot and District Headquarters Hospital Mithi, out of these 34 children were expired due to malnutrition, poor health condition and inadequate services in last 11 days. It is feared that more children are at severe risk due to the current health outbreak. During the last one year, 1070 children were brought in to the DHQ Mithi alone because of the malnourishment. As per the newspaper reports, 35 BHUs of District Mithi are closed due to the unavailability of staff and medicines and this is causing the augmentation in the current health issue. Following are the links of some of leading newspapers, covering the current issue during last couple of days.



<http://www.dawn.com/news/1231710>

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=285313>

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=285318>

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2016/01/11/death-toll-in-thar-rises-to-32-in-11-days/>

<http://nation.com.pk/editorials/11-Jan-2016/thar-continues-to-starve>

http://e.jang.com.pk/01-09-2016/karachi/pic.asp?picname=03_27.gif

<http://www.geo.tv/urdu/1-9-2016/u190789.htm>

1.2 Response

Out of a total of 256 health facilities in the region, 177 — a whopping 69% — do not have SNEs. Most patients, therefore, need to make their way to the Mithi civil hospital, which places an intolerable strain on that establishment's limited resources. A number of doctors' posts are also lying vacant because

³ <http://nation.com.pk/national/12-Jan-2016/more-deaths-in-thar-as-govt-fails-to-act>

medical professionals are reluctant to serve in an area where they cannot profit from private practice that is so lucrative elsewhere.

The provincial government has issued a press release that issue will be address on priority; resultantly the Govt of Sindh formed a high level committee to explore the issue detail and take corrective measures. The DHO and Health Advisor visited Mithi hospital on 5, Jan 2016 and assured full support. HAI-Pak field staff is in close coordination with the district Govt and monitoring the situation very closely. If the situation gets worse, HAI-Pak will respond accordingly.

There is no national or international NGO responding to this calamity. However, three local organizations, namely Al-Khidmat, PEMA and Relief Foundation are working in the area. However, they are focused in Mithi City, whereas nobody is working in the remote and more affected villages like Sajwani, Dunjh & Joghi Marhe.

1.3 Needs

There is urgent and dire shortage of Food in the area. As for as the long term needs are concern, the affected areas are primarily deprived of clean drinking water which has aggravated the nutrition and health problem. Therefore, to solve the issue for once for all, the issue of clean water needs to be addressed.



2. SWINE FLU – PUNJAB

One of the biggest issue arising now a days in Pakistan and globally is “Swine Flu infection” which is categorized under the zoonotic diseases. Swine influenza is a deadly virus which spreads through pigs, birds and infected migrated people and this virus kills the humans within no time. on the globe it is declared as pandemic and raised its pandemic alert level to “Phase-5” out of 6 maximum.

In Pakistan it was first reported in 2009 in people belonging to Rawalpindi and Kashmir and now a-days it’s been reported in Southern Punjab like Multan, DG Khan, Taunsa Sharif, Khanewal and even in Lahore. Swine Flu has been declared as pandemic by WHO and US CDC. In a Muslim country like Pakistan where there is no as such source of this virus, but the only source is, the migrant people from abroad. According to a survey on Aug, 2009 about 2 million Pakistanis live in Saudi Arabia, Europe, North America, and other countries where the swine flu pandemic has appeared. Similarly in our neighbor country India, In Oct. 2013 there were 13000 cases reported for swine flu with 444 deaths, starting from a 13 years old girl’s death.

According to Executive District Officer (EDO) Health of Multan, the virus is spreading due to unavailability of vaccine. Meanwhile at a private hospital of Lahore, a patient died of Swine Flu. Twelve more cases have been reported in the city.

Two more women died of swine flu and six other patients were confirmed with swine flu virus in Nishtar Medical Hospital Multan. Seven more patients within 24 hours were brought in Nishtar hospital where number of patients admitted rose to 18 and out of them six were confirmed with swine flu virus in blood test. Seven more people have been diagnosed of Swine Flu while a woman from Muzaffargarh who was admitted a few days ago in the Nishtar Hospital of multan expired in the isolation ward on Monday.

More details can be found here:

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1010101/h1n1-virus-swine-flu-patients-advised-to-hunt-for-antiviral-meds/>

<http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/317230-Multan-Woman-dies-of-Swine-Flu>

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/01/11/national/2-more-women-die-of-swine-flu-in-multan/>