

RAPID EMERGENCY ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION TEAM (REACT)

Floods in Khatlon: 7 – 13 May 2021

Rapid Assessment: initial findings

Background

Torrential rains of 11 May 2021 triggered over 13 mudflows in many districts of Khatlon province. According to initial reports of the Committee of Emergency Situations, among those affected Kulob appeared to be the worst affected having 3 deaths and over 15 streets of the city covered by mud.

On 12 May 2021, REACT co-chairs the Chairman of the Committee of Emergency Situations (CoES) and UN Resident Coordinator called for number of immediate actions, including: (1) provision of immediate relief aid, (2) deployment of REACT Rapid Response Team (the Team) to Kulob city for situation assessment and (3) extraordinary on-site REACT meeting in Kulob city.

Current note provides a brief overview of initial findings of situations assessment conducted by the Team in Kulob city.

RRT and assessment approach

RRT composition: WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, AKAH, RCST and OCHA.

Team coordination: OCHA

Operational support in the field: UNDP

Scope and objectives: to identify the humanitarian caseload and priority needs.

Methodology: visual observations, key informant interviews and random household survey. Key informants included, water, sanitation and health authorities representatives, community leaders, members of Commission on ES.

Duration: 1 day

Assessment findings

As the date of the assessment, Government Assessment Teams have surveyed 867 households, of which 586 households are reported to be in need of assistance. As assessment are continued, it is expected that number of affected population and people in need will increase accordingly.

Along with the households' survey, Commission on Emergency Situations led by the Prime Minister is undertaking the damage assessment, which will provide detailed data on damages. Meanwhile, the Team observed major destructions to private houses, flood diversion channels, roads, water pipes and others.

Team also observed on-going massive response (or so called "liquidation") actions, which include debris removal, constant disinfection of the affected territories, road access restoration and restoration of communal services.

Key observations:

- Population is frustrated and stressed, as they feel left out of the assessment process. Accordingly, they are afraid that assistance will not reach them.
- Those most severely affected seem to be the most vulnerable, with very weak infrastructure and limited assets.
- Affected people underwent psychological trauma fearing repeated floods, feeling completely insecure and incapable to recover.
- As it is urban territories, not much food stocks have been noticed. Nonetheless, even available food stocks have been destroyed. Situation is exacerbated due to damages caused to cooking facilities.
- Children are staying with their families in the destroyed and damaged houses (might be because of Eid/day off), which are not very safe for children.
- Very big number of people movement (responders, population, assessment missions), with almost no observance of COVID – 19 precautionary measures.
- While population realizes that area is flood prone, the design of the houses is not flood resilient.

Immediate Needs:- Chlorine and continued disinfection

Sanitary services have been provided by some stock of chlorine (around 1 MT) for disinfection of affected territories. As it is not clear, how long the debris removal will continue, existing stocks might be depleted soon. With increasing weather temperature and possible suspension of disinfection works, the risk infectious diseases will increase drastically.

- Fuel

A huge number of transport means is involved in response operations for transportation of responders, cleaning of debris, delivery of relief assistance and etc. Depletion of fuel might pose significant delays in restoration of regular livelihood of the city.

- Drinking water

Limited pre-disaster water supply (supplied only few hours a day) was disrupted by the mudflow. Considering consequences of the mudflow, availability of clean water is of vital importance. If clean water is supplied by tankers it is important to ensure delivery of the water as close as possible to each house.

- Family Tents

Government does not foresee establishment of temporary shelters and/or collective centers. It is expected that people will remain hosted by their relatives and neighbors. However, interviews revealed that many families are willing to return to their houses, if any comparably safe living space will be available. Particularly, families were referring to tents, which can be erected in their yards.

- Hygiene items, Non-Food Items (bedding sets, clothing, kitchen utensils and etc)

Belongings of affected families have been destroyed by the mudflow and can not be restored.

- Mental health and psycho-social support.

Random interviews with affected families, show that many underwent psychological trauma, still having strong feelings of fear and insecurity.

- Water pumps for wastewater discharge, construction tools and Tarpalium

The team observed that Emergency Operations Center (Shtab) was not able to accommodate the needs of the affected families in workforce. Provision of construction tools and some very basic materials, such as tarpalium would enable affected families to undertaken some reconstruction works individually, speeding the restoration process.

- Food items and cooking facilities.

In many cases existing food stocks and kitchen facilities of the affected families have been destroyed. Although, the team did not observe any shortage of food in local markets, there are major concerns that families, who suffered severe financial (asset) losses, have capacities to procure sufficient quantity and quality of food.

Longer term needs:- Support to livelihood recovery

Interviews with the affected families and local community leaders revealed that mudflow in many cases, have destroyed/damaged main income sources (shops, agricultural land, workshops and etc), which fell out of Government assessment process and response actions.

- Multipurpose cash support

As mentioned above, the worst affected families appeared to be the most vulnerable, hence multipurpose cash support through national program of the Targeted Social Assistance (or any other programme/approach) could be considered.

- Construction materials for affected families and support to authorities in reconstruction of social infrastructure.

General recommendations (immediate and longer-term):

- To set up mechanisms for transparent and open communication with the affected population (ie: accessible lists with the names and addresses of those families assessed and included in the list of the assistance recipients; Establishing notification system about upcoming distributions of the relief assistance and etc.)
 - Simplified and (preferably) free of charge procedures for restoration of legal documents, which have been lost during the mudflow. (ie “Single window” concept can be introduced temporarily to address the needs of those affected).
 - Support to host families.
 - Ensuring riverbank cleaning and appropriate reinforcement, before any other infrastructure reconstruction is even initiated.
 - Simplified and temporary admission of children to kindergartens or other safe spaces. Adult members of the families are heavily engaged in restoration of livelihoods and houses, leaving less time for taking care of children.
 - Community based DRR interventions. DRR interventions, could potentially train community members/masters on floods resilient construction.
 - Risk assessment of the city and longer term DRR plan to avoid “repeating” disasters (remembering 2010 flood).

