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U.S. Gives Additional \$20 Million to Aid Pakistani Flood Victims

U.S. Contributions to Pakistan Flood Relief Now Top \$55 Million

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — As the humanitarian catastrophe caused by flooding in Pakistan continues to spread, the Obama administration announced it is contributing an additional \$20 million with a special focus on the south of the country as flood waters expand into that region.

To date, the United States has contributed \$55 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the crisis, and “our contribution may well grow as we get better insight” into the disaster, said Mark Ward, acting director of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Ward said August 10 that as relief workers gradually gain access to more areas inside Pakistan and flooding spreads, the scale of the disaster is growing more apparent.

To speed up the delivery of assistance, the U.S. funds are being channeled through members of the international humanitarian community, including Pakistani nongovernmental organizations, he said.

“What we’re going to be doing with this additional money is, just as the flood is moving south, we are going to move south. We are going to expand those activities with new organizations and existing organizations that we’ve been supporting so that they can move their activities as the flood goes south,” Ward said.

The State Department’s deputy special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Dan Feldman, said U.S. military personnel and equipment are providing additional assistance by using helicopters to rescue people stranded by the floods and to deliver aid.

According to an August 10 State Department fact sheet, the six U.S. Army helicopters have evacuated 2,305 people and delivered 211,000 pounds (95,708 kilos) of relief supplies since they arrived August 5.

The fact sheet said the Obama administration so far has provided a month’s ration of food to about 168,500 people through the World Food Programme (WFP). U.S.-funded food rations are reaching about 20,000 people per day and include 436,000 halal meals, the fact sheet said.

The U.S. has provided 12 prefabricated steel bridges as temporary replacements for those that have washed out, 18 Zodiac rescue boats, six water filtration units that each can produce enough clean water for 10,000 people per

day, a 25-kilowatt electric generator, 10 water storage bladders and 30 concrete-cutting saws.

Feldman said 14 million people in Pakistan have already been affected by the floods, and millions may be homeless. There have been reports of food prices quadrupling, hundreds of roads and bridges washed out, as well as the destruction of agricultural crops and the inability to plant for the coming year.

“The immediate repercussions are dramatic, and yet almost more importantly is the fact that this is very much a medium- to longer-term issue with food security, with the economic infrastructure, and with needs that will be ongoing for many months, if not years,” he said.

The additional \$20 million “shows the degree of U.S. commitment” to mitigating the humanitarian crisis, he said. “In the face of this disaster, we very much want the Pakistani people to know that the people of the United States are behind them [and] are helping,” Feldman said.

Ward said the immediate concern is to fill the food gap in the country. Despite difficulties in reaching much of the country, that effort appears to be going well.

“WFP estimates ... the United States is filling half of the food gap right now,” he said. “We give a lot of credit to WFP for moving ... a lot of food, even on the days that we couldn’t get the [helicopters] in the air. They’ve been using four-wheel-drive trucks, and they’ve been using mules,” Ward said.

In remarks to reporters August 9, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke said the death toll from the floods, currently estimated at more than 1,400, appears less catastrophic than the country’s 2005 earthquake, which killed 75,000. But he said more people have been affected by the 2010 flooding. The continuing rains are endangering the dam above Sindh, and “the situation will reach an even more catastrophic level” if that dam breaks, he said.

Holbrooke said the flooding is “a major international humanitarian crisis that the world must rally to.” U.S. officials have been contacting other governments to urge them to send more assistance.

Holbrooke and other U.S. officials have also been urging Americans to join the relief effort. By texting “SWAT” to the number 50555, U.S.-based callers can make a \$10 contribution that will help the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees provide tents, clothing, food, clean drinking water and medicine to the Pakistani people displaced by the floods.

Vietnam, U.S. Mark Diplomatic Anniversary with Naval Exercises

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — In celebration of 15 years of diplomatic ties between Vietnam and the United States, the port of Da Nang is hosting the first visit of the guided missile destroyer USS John S. McCain beginning August 10. The destroyer will host training and engagement opportunities between American and Vietnamese sailors as well as be a focal point for local community-outreach activities.

The USS McCain is part of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and is named for Admiral John S. McCain, the father of U.S. Senator John McCain. The younger McCain spent several years as a prisoner of war in Hanoi during the Vietnam War. According to an August 8 Seventh Fleet press release, the weeklong activities between U.S. sailors and the Vietnam People's Navy are centered on noncombat training, including shipboard damage control, search-and-rescue demonstrations and cultural-skills exchanges such as cooking events.

U.S. and Vietnamese sailors will also take part in "medical and dental civic-action projects, an underway aircraft carrier embark, and ship visits," as well as a volleyball game and barbeque event. In Da Nang, the U.S. naval personnel will conduct community-outreach projects at a school and an orphanage, according to the press release.

"This is indicative of the increasingly closer ties between the U.S. and Vietnam," Rear Admiral Ron Horton, commander of Task Force 73 and Logistics Group Western Pacific, said in the press release. "Exchanges like this are vital for our navies to gain a greater understanding of one another, and build important relationships for the future."

The visit also reflects the importance of maritime security to both countries as their trade continues to expand. In 2009, according to press reports, the United States was Vietnam's top export market as well as its largest foreign investor, and trade between the two countries amounted to \$15.4 billion.

During her July 22 visit to Vietnam to mark the 15th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said that since 1995, both countries have "made an intensive effort to rebuild ties that increase engagement on issues as diverse as health and human rights, energy, security, defense, and most certainly business, trade, and investment." U.S. investment has contributed to expanding economic opportunity in the country, even as Washington continues to push for greater political freedom in Vietnam, she said.

"This is not a relationship that is fixed upon our differences. We have learned to see each other not as former enemies, but as actual and potential partners, colleagues and friends. This tradition of cooperation is bringing great benefits to us both," Clinton said.

In video remarks he prepared for an August 13 closing reception on board the USS McCain, Senator McCain said the progress in the bilateral relationship "is one of the happier surprises I've experienced." Expected to attend the reception are representatives of the Vietnamese government, navy, media and civil society.

"The normalization of our relationship is a tribute to the profound strength and magnanimity of the Vietnamese people. It is a testament to the fundamental decency and confidence of the American public. It is a credit to the practicality and forbearance of leaders in both our governments. And it is a story of countless individuals, both Vietnamese and Americans, coming to terms with a painful past, refusing to look back in anger, and doing what is right for their countries," McCain said.

The port call of the ship named for his father "is a fitting way to honor the 15th anniversary" and is "rich with historical meaning," McCain said.

"Thirty-seven years ago, at the end of a long and terrible war, the United States and Vietnam parted as enemies. Today, the warship that bears my family's name arrives in friendship. Her officers and crew are greeted as friends. I consider it an extraordinary blessing to have lived long enough to have seen this day," he said.

But the real importance of the visit "should be measured by what it signals about the future of the U.S.-Vietnam relationship," which the senator said has great potential. He expressed confidence that "together, our two countries will add to the security, the prosperity and one day, I hope, to the freedom of all countries."

U.S. Global Health Initiative Partners Seek Innovation for Impact

Eight of 20 countries chosen to lead "GHI Plus" capacity-building program

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington — As part of the United States' Global Health Initiative (GHI), up to 20 countries will receive technical and management resources that will help them quickly implement innovative health solutions. The first eight countries have been chosen and work has begun.

The GHI is a six-year, \$63 billion initiative focused on preventing illnesses in a unified, sustained manner.

GHI investments will help strengthen health systems, improve maternal and child health, address neglected tropical diseases and increase research and development. Programs range from efforts to strengthen country health care systems to working more closely with country governments and international partners to focus on patients rather than diseases.

"We cannot simply confront individual preventable illnesses in isolation," President Obama said in May 2009 when he launched the GHI. "The world is interconnected and that demands an integrated approach to global health."

GHI activities are being implemented in more than 80 countries where U.S. government global health dollars are already at work.

Also included in the initiative is expanding small, successful programs to larger audiences.

Building on a decade of success in fighting malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, Anne-Marie Slaughter, the State Department's director of policy planning, said during a July 29 briefing, GHI will "translate the outcomes of programs focused on single diseases, moving to create larger systems that will improve health outcomes across the board and that will be more sustainable over the longer term."

The eight countries — Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal and Rwanda — are "GHI Plus" nations, meaning the United States will give extra effort and attention to try to build their systems and spread the programs they develop more broadly around the world.

GHI investments will help strengthen health systems, improve maternal and child health, address neglected tropical diseases and increase research and development.

"GHI Plus is a mechanism by which we hope to achieve a great deal of learning," said Dana Hyde, senior adviser to Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew. "But we are committed to all countries where we maintain these health investments. As our capacity grows, we are very much going to be working all across the globe in all of those countries."

PARTNERS IN INNOVATION

A focus on collaboration will improve coordination among U.S. agencies engaged in global health, including the three agencies whose top officials lead GHI: the U.S.

Agency for International Development, led by Dr. Rajiv Shah; the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, led by Dr. Eric Goosby; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, led by Dr. Thomas Frieden.

Private global organizations are also GHI partners. They include the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation; the World Bank; the wide range of United Nations agencies; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; PATH; and other international organizations.

The principle behind prioritizing innovation, Slaughter said, is to identify, evaluate and implement entrepreneurial approaches to public health. Examples include the following:

- Integrated prevention and treatment of diarrheal disease and pneumonia, including encouraging the use of breastfeeding, vitamin A and zinc supplements, household sanitation and point-of-use water purification, oral rehydration therapy, and rotavirus and pneumococcal vaccines.
- Community-based programs to help communities encourage women and children to use health services.
- Financing innovations to increase the use of health services, including vouchers, incentives for screening and adherence to treatment, community mobilization and behavior-change communications.

Innovations can range from simple to sophisticated, said Dr. Tadataka Yamada, president of the Global Health Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. One of the simplest innovations is called kangaroo mother care, named for the way kangaroo mothers keep babies in their pouches.

Among the leading causes of death of newborns is preterm labor, he said. "In the U.S., a baby born before term is put in an incubator, given oxygen. Rarely do they have to die. In the developing world, there is no such thing. But the best incubator is a mother's chest," he said.

A simple strap keeps the baby on the mother's chest, allowing baby and mother to bond, making breastfeeding easier and keeping the baby warm.

"But science has also told us there's another unique advantage," Yamada said. "Healthy people have healthy bacteria on their skin and these bacteria prevent bad bacteria from growing on the child's skin, preventing the child from dying from sepsis [bacterial blood infection]. A simple tool, and now we're beginning to understand the scientific basis for why it's important."

NEW IDEAS

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is also searching for really new ideas, Yamada said. "In malaria, for example, I'll give you a glimpse of what some of these ideas look like."

In the malaria parasite there is a pigment (a substance that gives a structure color) that forms a crystal, he said. The crystal can vibrate if it is exposed to certain kinds of microwaves, the kind of microwaves people are exposed to when they pass through an airline security station. The hypothesis is that this will cause the crystal to vibrate and set up a program of cell death that will kill the parasite.

"So imagine," Yamada said. "You take a whole village, pass them through an airline security counter, and the malaria is cured. Does that seem far-fetched? They've got some evidence that it might work, and they've got \$100,000 from us to test it. If it does work, what an incredible advance it would be. That's innovation."

AGOA Ministers Learn Importance of Adding Value to Commodities

Visit a Kansas City coffee roaster to see raw beans processed for U.S. sale

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Kansas City, Missouri — Delegates to the ninth annual U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum were able to witness firsthand the importance of adding value to commodities when they visited a Kansas City coffee roaster.

AGOA ministers and other delegates to the forum — known as the AGOA Forum, for the African Growth and Opportunity Act — toured The Roasterie coffee roasting company to see how raw coffee beans from Africa and around the world are roasted and processed into a superior product for sale to U.S. consumers.

Adding value is important because it allows commodity producers to gain more income by creating higher-value specialty products rather than just selling the raw commodity.

Speaking on the importance of the AGOA visitors to his plant, self-described bean baron and owner of The Roasterie Danny O'Neill told America.gov, "There is nothing like face to face," meetings like the one with the African visitors August 5. "Today, technically, you could stay on the Internet and not talk to anyone and do the business, but we are very old-fashioned, so it is great. There are all kinds of things that happen" during such a meeting.

O'Neill said that about 25 percent of his company's output of premier, custom air-roasted coffees are from Africa — spread across Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda and Zambia. Central America, South America and Indonesian coffees make up the rest of his company's 1 million pound (400,000 kilo) annual production output, all in about 25 percent increments from the four geographic areas, he said.

The Roasterie is about an \$8 million company that as a specialty coffee roaster is considered a small business, O'Neill said, adding that size does not matter to him as much as the quality of their product.

Because African farms are so small, O'Neill said, his company buys from agricultural cooperatives. "In a perfect world, we know the people we are buying from. We get involved in the community, we have long-term relationships. We are all about quality, quality, quality, quality."

Additionally, he said, his company prides itself on paying just prices to farmers. "We are not in this for the short term; we are in this for the long term and looking for the best quality. If you are not making money, you are not going to be around. So it is in our selfish best interest to do well and that there is a good relationship" between his company and African farmers.

Profit is not a bad word, he said, if it is done right and everyone along the product chain benefits. "We compare profit to altitude if you are flying. You have options if you have altitude. If you are down close to the ground [with little money] you have no options, and if you are not making any money there are no options."

Looking to the future, O'Neill said: "I think Africa has huge opportunities because there are people who are not growing coffee right now who could. There are areas that are not growing coffee that could. Global warming is going to ... introduce new areas of the world that can grow coffee that cannot right now" and vice versa, and there will be much room to expand.

Africa, he said, "has a great agricultural base right now and as they continue to improve on that like the rest of the world, they will increase production from existing land — so that is on the supply side. On the demand side, that is increasing worldwide.

"Low-quality coffee demand is not" increasing, he said. "Demand for high-quality coffee is increasing," he said, and farmers make more money growing and selling high-quality coffee. Speaking of Africa, he said, "I think they are set up and positioned well."

Right now, he said, "Africa is 'cool'" and the "in" place to be doing business, he said. "I think that bodes well for Africa too. That touches on everything. Selfishly, that makes African coffee more enticing, but I think it goes across all products."

O'Neill said his company does process tea as well, but not as much. "With coffee, it is like 50 cups a pound, but with tea it is like 200 cups. People who drink tea don't intend to drink as much as coffee."

He said his company is not yet processing any African teas but he has visited tea farms in Kenya and sees great potential. Pointing to pictures of himself on a Kenyan tea farm that adorn his headquarters, he said, "I loved it, I absolutely loved it," and fondly spoke of his exposure to African farmers. He said, affectionately, that he held so many Kenyan children on that visit to a tea farm that his arms hurt for days.

O'Neill said he has visited Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Ethiopia, but looks forward to exploring more countries in Africa looking for product.

One of the AGOA guests who toured The Roasterie plant was Abdulsalam Usman, the assistant director of Nigeria's Ministry of Commerce and Industry. "This is a very big lesson that we will be taking home on the importance of value-added," he told America.gov. "We went around the factory and we saw bags of coffee beans that were imported from coffee-producing countries. The value-added that has been done with just simple technology — which is what Africa requires — is what Africans can do as well."

There is a region in northeastern Nigeria where coffee is being produced but, unfortunately, not in large quantities, he explained. "With the backing of the financial institutions and those engaged in the coffee business, we can be able to add so much value to coffee production" that Nigerians will be able to make first-quality products, he said.

The ninth annual AGOA Forum, which met this year both in Washington and Kansas City, Missouri, adjourned August 6.

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