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Avalanche Victims Receive Aid



Photo: Mercy Corps

During the night of January 31, 2006, snow avalanches struck several villages in the mountainous district of Jirgital, Tajikistan. Initial reports stated that 18 people had died, seven were hospitalized, and ten homes were destroyed. The Tajik Ministry of Emergency Situations and the World Food Program said they had sent trucks from Dushanbe with food and other emergency supplies, but that it would likely take several days for them to reach Jirgital.

When it became clear that no immediate help was getting through to the affected area, a USAID partner loaded two pick-up trucks with wheat flour and vegetable oil donated by USAID. The food came from the stock of a USAID program that works in the Rasht Valley to overcome food insecurity through agriculture, food distribution, and health programming. The trucks were the first outside assistance to reach the village.

The District Chairman and Minister of Emergency Situations, Mirzo Ziyoev, and village leaders helped identify the families who had suffered the loss of family members and were most affected by the

avalanche. The families received 1,400 kg of wheat flour and 144 liters of vegetable oil.

The speed of the USAID food delivery was important to these families who had lost their homes and family members. Mr. Hojiev Sharif, who lost three of his children in the avalanche, said, "To lose my children, as well as to have my house destroyed, is a tragedy I never imagined would happen. I am grateful for the food we received. It will help as we try to put our lives back together."

Families receive food donated by USAID after a February 2006 avalanche struck the district of Jirgital, Tajikistan.

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