



Background



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U.S. DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH PAKISTAN – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

(Remarks by USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Mark Ward)

NEW YORK, November 20, 2006 – Following is the text of the speech, as prepared for delivery, by the Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID, Mr. Mark Ward, at the Association of Physicians of Pakistan-Descent of North America (APPNA) Fall meeting on November 18, 2006.

(Begin text)

Assalamu Alaikum

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. **It is a pleasure** to be with you tonight at APPNA's Fall Meeting in New York. I **especially want** to recognize Dr. Piracha, Dr. Cheema and the local host committee for their **leadership**, and for inviting me to address you today on behalf of USAID.

As the head of USAID's South Asia Earthquake Task Force on reconstruction, I am well aware of how Pakistanis, and Pakistani-Americans, have united to help Pakistan to recover from the devastating earthquake. APPNA has a proud tradition of helping the people of Pakistan during times of need. I remember meeting many of the APPNA volunteer doctors working at the U.S. Military MASH Unit in Muzafferabad. Over 150 of your fellow doctors went to Pakistan to help those whose lives were torn apart during one of the worst and most complicated natural disasters of our time, and I applaud you for your sincere efforts.

As most of you know, the 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit near the provincial capital of Muzaffarabad. The earthquake killed over 74,000 people, seriously injured another 70,000 and left over 2.8 million homeless. Mountainous terrain, cold weather, and collapsed infrastructure hindered the delivery of humanitarian relief.

The U.S. response was immediate and massive. Within 48 hours of the earthquake, the first CH-47 Chinook helicopters arrived from Afghanistan. At the height of disaster relief operations, the U.S. Army provided 21 Chinooks simultaneously. By October 10, USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was on the ground to help

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coordinate the relief effort. Focusing on immediate humanitarian needs, U.S. assistance provided emergency shelter, relief supplies, and medical care.

The numbers are well known. 370,000 people received relief supplies through a vast airlift. Thousands of tons of relief materials and pieces of heavy engineering equipment were delivered. 3,500 people received emergency medical treatment, and another 20,000 were inoculated at U.S. military hospitals. The Mobile Army Surgical Hospital—the MASH unit—was the site of over 400 operations and emergency care for 20,000 patients during the relief effort.

Earlier this year, the U.N. Secretary General appointed former U.S. President George H.W. Bush as his Special Envoy for the South Asian Earthquake Disaster response. Last January, I accompanied him on a visit to Pakistan to assess the situation first hand and meet with affected families and children. I remember a temporary school we visited in a camp outside Islamabad. We were supporting the school in the form of salaries for 30 teachers, as well as educational materials. I remember as President Bush handed out stationary packets from USAID, he asked children about their hopes for the future. One six-year old boy responded, “I want to go back home as soon as we can.”

Well, I can be almost 99% sure that boy is home now. I was in Pakistan earlier this month, and I was truly impressed with the progress since my last visit, five months ago.

I visited a boys’ high school we rebuilt in Dadar, which was reopened last month as part of the one year anniversary activities with the Prime Minister. This new school—in addition to the two girls’ schools we are rebuilding nearby—has infused a new enthusiasm, a new hope into the people of the area. It is truly first class, better than any other school in the area. We heard students in Abbotabad want to shift to the new school in Dadar. And this, really, is what our post-relief activities have been about. Building back better so parents need never fear sending their children to school again.

You may have seen reports of a claim by OXFAM that 1.8 million people are still not living in permanent homes -- and so are dangerously vulnerable this winter. Oxfam was misquoted. In fact, the vast majority of the nearly 3 million people displaced by the quake are no longer living in tents. They are in permanent and temporary homes that will see them through the winter. The last time I was in Pakistan you couldn’t count all the bright blue tents you flew over on the way up the valleys. Two weeks ago I flew over those same valleys. The tents are gone. In their place are bright shiny roofs of corrugated iron reflecting the bright sunlight. Yes, some people will have to live with relatives again this winter, even a few in camps, but the great majority are back home in temporary and permanent housing.

We are continuing to track conditions to the small percentage of people who are still vulnerable and are ready to call up the resources needed to ensure that they’ll make it through the winter.

Our efforts in the earthquake affected areas are moving into a new, longer-term reconstruction phase.

Over the next four years, USAID's \$200 million Earthquake Reconstruction program will build schools, hospitals and other health facilities, improve education and health services, and restore damaged livelihoods. In the first year alone, we will rebuild 50 schools and 15 hospitals, half in NWFP and half in AJK.

As you know, President Bush asked five prominent American CEOs to raise private funds for the earthquake effort. I helped advise the fund to identify short and long-term reconstruction projects. The Committee to Encourage Corporate Philanthropy reports that, to date, private support, including the fund, has totaled over \$113M in cash and in-kind to the Pakistan earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts. I want to thank you for that significant amount because I know a lot of those donations came from you and your families and friends.

If there is a "silver lining" to the tragedy of the earthquake it is this: AJK is now open to USAID and other donors. Access to health care will get better and better. Working with APPNA we prevented a major public health outbreak last winter after the earthquake. We can all be very proud of that fact. Now we can build for the future and ensure that winters in AJK and the Frontier will never bring horrific death tolls like we saw just two years ago.

USAID assistance to Pakistan is certainly not limited to earthquake relief and reconstruction, although our work in the earthquake areas is the most easily apparent and perhaps the most widely recognized.

We are improving care for pregnant women and newborns by upgrading 31 hospitals and training 2,000 community midwives. USAID social marketing programs are increasing information on and availability of quality reproductive health products so families can space child births. We are also helping to eradicate polio, reach communities vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and lower the incidence of tuberculosis.

We have also recently launched a new child health program in FATA, working with the FATA Secretariat and medical personnel to improve the quality and availability of health services throughout all seven Agencies in FATA.

During my visit to Pakistan, our USAID health officers told me that the goal motivating all of their work is "a partnership for a healthy nation."

I think that this truly encapsulates our efforts. Good health is everyone's responsibility. In Pakistan, USAID works closely with the national government, provincial leaders, district nazims, community leaders, Imams and individuals to build stronger systems, teach better skills, and improve the quality of healthcare countrywide.

But this partnership extends beyond just USAID and the people of Pakistan. It also includes the efforts of the many local and international organizations—like APPNA—that work to improve the lives of the Pakistani people.

Thank you again for inviting me to your banquet and we at USAID look forward to working with you on rebuilding a stronger and better Pakistan for all its citizens.

Pakistan Zindabad!

(End text)