

After the earthquake

Update on the relief work of the Labour Education Foundation

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We are reproducing here the update received by mail from the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) on its relief work, after the earthquake. ESSF is giving its support to this initiative. We hope to publish regular updates on it, as well as on others.

Here is an update of our relief work in the effected areas.

We have focused in two areas. After the discussion, it was decided that Paniola town in Rawalakot district in Kashmir and some isolated village in Balakot district in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) will be our area of work. The destruction is on massive scale and we had no choice but to restrict ourselves in two selected areas.

Paniola is 12 kilometer away from Rawalkot district of Kashmir. Paniola is a small town, 12 kilometer from Balakot. There are 38 villages around the town. They are located on both sides of Paniola, upward on the mountains and downward towards the valley. The town has a small bazaar. The registered votes on the local areas are 62,000. There are two union councils in the area, Pachiot and Bangohi. There is one girl,s college 4 kilometer from Paniola and one boy,s college 7 kilometer from here. Paniola is mainly a trading town with shops of all kind. The total population of the town will be not more than 2000.

It is mainly an area comprising working people. Some has gone to Middle East and many to other parts of Pakistan in search of work. There very few who could be regarded as rich and middle class. There is no industry in the area. The main work at Paniola is petty trading and selling milk and goats. Some also sell grass.

The earthquake on 8th October has hit the area and the damage is colossal. There are not human casualties as is the case of Bagh but almost every house in the villages particularly towards the valley is damaged or totally destroyed. It is estimated that there are around 350 casualties and many more injured. Most of the people have to live outside their demolished houses and some has managed some tents. And locally made some sort of shelter of cloths blankets and bed sheets. The winter is approaching and the

situation will get worst.

For first two days, there was no help arrived from anywhere. Although several trucks load of good were passing from here to go to Rawalkot and Bagh. This was building frustration among the villagers. Nisar Shah, chairperson Labour Party Pakistan belong to this area. He is practicing advocate in Karachi. He was able to come here on 9th October. The first help arrived here on 11th October from Lahore sent by Labour Relief Campaign. This was followed by several more trucks sent from Lahore. Several volunteers from Lahore LPP stayed here few days to help in distribution and survey of the area.

The idea of setting up local committee was not materialized until the first relief truck that arrived here on 11th October. Local had no trust as this might be just a talk show. Since then, 13 village committees have been set up. There is a central relief committee now working on the name of Citizen Relief Committee headed by Nisar Shah. A team of 10 members from Lahore visited the area on 18th October. The area need immediate and long term relief and rehabilitation work.

The main need of the area is shelter, food and medicines.

The other focal area of our work is some village at Balakot area in NWFP.

At Sanghar, Kashian, Bhanghian and Josach villages in Balakot district, there are 80 per cent casualties and 100 percent houses are demolished, one of the worst hit area. These villages are around 30 kilometer from Balakot city. Some more relief has finally arrived in the villages after 12 days. Labour Relief Campaign was the first one to reach the area on 13th October after five days of the most disaster our earthquake in Pakistan.

Here as well, a local relief committee is been established to help coordinate the work. This most effected area. We heard that teams from China and army has now reached in the area and has provided some tents, food and medicines.

A lot more has to be done in this area including the rebuilding of the education and health system. The immediate need is shelter, food and medicines.

What has been done so far

We have sent nine truck loads of food, tents, medicine, blankets and cloths. That has been distributed by the local committees and by the volunteers of Labour Relief Campaign. We have established a temporary office and a store in Paniola. At this place, we are the only one helping the area. Every day, dozens of effectees of the villages from the top of the mountains and from the valley come to the office to ask for the help.

We are also trying to help build the networking of different organizations in Pakistan who are involved in relief and rehabilitation work.

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