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PAKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Displaced Pakistanis Benefit From USAID Clinic

Displaced by the Taliban, camp residents receive critical health services from USAID



A USAID-supported program conducted medical consultations for more than 50,000 people displaced by the Taliban from Swat Valley.

“No words can express the joy I felt when my son opened his eyes,” said Rauf, the boy’s father. “My small gift cannot to begin to express my gratitude to USAID for setting up this clinic.”

Telling Our Story
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In May 2009, a team of USAID-supported health specialists in the Swat Valley received a curt message from the Taliban: Get out or expect to be beheaded. The health specialists were working to improve access and quality of health services in the region, but they soon found themselves among the exodus of more than two million people from the valley.

“We had to leave our office with little notice. When we arrived, our sister project was already operating in the area, so we went to work with them,” said Amhed Nasir, a project officer with the USAID-supported initiative that focuses specifically on health of mothers and newborns.

Within five days, the new teams joined forces with partners already operating in the districts to provide needed relief to the overwhelmed healthcare system. The first priority was to find a suitable place to care for the expectant mothers among the 300,000 camp dwellers.

“Women in labor were lying on the bare ground at the camp in Charsadda,” said Dr. Shuiab Khan, a program director for the USAID-supported initiative, who coordinated the effort.

Project staff worked with the government and other aid agencies to supply the displaced with mattresses for the mothers, mother-and-baby kits, food, cooking pots and utensils, latrines, and clean water. The government identified four temporary birthing centers, including a sugar mill that had been closed for 30 years, an abandoned health center, and a vacant house.

The USAID project prepared and staffed the facilities with trained birth attendants. Expectant mothers were moved inside, and revolving shifts treated up to 400 patients a day. Because the majority of the displaced stayed with host families, two mobile medical camps were established, which together treated nearly 52,000 people a week, assisting with birthing, pre- and post-natal care, vaccinations, and family planning counseling.

For children under five, life in the camps during the hottest part of the year was especially harsh. Skin ailments and dysentery were rampant; the medical camps supplied up to 60 intravenous drips a day for children to combat dehydration. One day, USAID project staff noticed a young couple weeping over a three-month-old boy, certain he had died from the heat. Doctors were able to resuscitate and rehydrate the boy. Within 20 minutes, he opened his eyes and started to cry. Within two hours, the family was on their way back to the camp. The next day, the parents returned with the best gift they could muster: two hen’s eggs.

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