Introduction

Worst floods in history

Six months have passed since Pakistan experienced the worst monsoon floods in its recorded history. Unprecedented amounts of rain and breaches in dams and embankments from late July to mid September 2010 displaced millions of people. Suddenly, the nation that was still healing from the ravages of a massive earthquake and dealing with political, social and economic crises has had another emergency of epic and unimaginable proportions on its hands.

In the north, the violent flood waters ended the lives of close to 2,000 people. The total number of affected people – 20 million – exceeded the combined total of people affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, the 2008 Cyclone Nargis and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. One in 10 Pakistanis were affected by the unprecedented floods that covered – at its height – an area the size of England. More than two million homes were damaged or destroyed and over two million hectares of crops were lost. The World Bank estimated recovery costs to be between US$8-10 billion. For the 10 million children affected by the floods, the disaster has meant the loss of homes, belongings, clothing, school, healthcare and food.

At the height of the floods, millions of people were displaced across all four provinces and camps dotted Pakistan’s landscape. Each region experienced the floods differently as the waters ravaged the mountainous northern areas, down to the vast farmlands, the busy cities, towards the delta that opens up to the Arabian Sea. Yet, in the struggle, the people of Pakistan have been united, demonstrating remarkable resilience. Some in the north have had to face triple threats: struggling with the fierce floods, displacement caused by conflict and the arrival of a bitterly cold winter. Many in the south are confronted with land that is still under water after six months.

UNICEF has been working for Pakistan’s children for over 60 years and has worked alongside the Government and the people of Pakistan in many natural disasters. During the flooding, UNICEF devoted all its time, resources and energy to making sure that children and women were being reached with supplies and services, mounting one of the largest emergency responses in its history.
In August, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake visited the flood ravaged areas and called on the world to help the people of Pakistan. The UN initially appealed for US$460 million in donations to provide aid to 14 million people over a 12 month period and later revised its appeal.

**UNICEF’s response: an insider’s look**

**July 2010**

What made the 2010 Pakistan floods unique was that it was a slowly unfolding disaster that stretched and worsened over a period of seven straight weeks or 50 consecutive days. Following the initial heavy flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in the last days of July 2010, UNICEF immediately initiated an emergency response. Two days later, the UNICEF Representative declared that the Pakistan Country Office was in full emergency mode following an aerial mission by the Humanitarian Coordinator, confirming the severity of the situation.

**August 2010**

By August 19, three weeks into the floods, the number of affected persons rose from 400,000 to more than 15 million. UNICEF dispatched its field officers to different areas of the country to try and get a more accurate picture of what was happening on the ground, and to organise and implement responses. At the same time, the magnitude of the response required a massive scaling up of UNICEF staff, partnerships and procurement of supplies.
Martin Mogwanja’s designation as full time Humanitarian Coordinator for the UN in Pakistan was activated. Until then, he had been serving as both UNICEF Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, tasked with overseeing 15 UN agencies and hundreds of NGOs responding to the floods. UNICEF Regional Director of South Asia Daniel Toole became the Special Representative for the UNICEF flood response starting September 22. The Integrated Survival Strategy was drafted with the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization at this time, in conjunction with the Health, Nutrition, Food and WASH clusters, ensuring very close coordinated response across these areas, to prevent a “second wave emergency” of disease outbreaks. In addition, thousands of child friendly spaces and temporary learning centers were established in camps.

September 2010

In September, the number of persons displaced by the flood continued to grow, especially in Sindh province where embankments continued to be breached. It was only on September 16, the date thought by many to be the height of the emergency, that the final number of affected people was determined: 20 million people, among them ten million children. More than 75 per cent of the flood damage was found to have occurred in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab.

Also in September, UNICEF Pakistan Representative

August also saw the establishment of new UNICEF emergency hubs in Multan, Sukkur and Hyderabad, in addition to maintaining the existing field offices in Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore and Quetta. The central UNICEF office in Islamabad served as the operations center. In August, UNICEF requisitioned over US$29 million worth of local supplies and US$41 million offshore for a total of US$70 million, as compared to the previous year’s US$400,000 worth of local and US$35,000 offshore supplies.

In October, the discovery of a pocket of 70 families living stranded and still unreached on an embankment in Supria Band, Dadu, Sindh Province, surprised the humanitarian community. Surrounded by water and reachable only by motorized boat, they had survived on the embankment without access to any assistance. In the following weeks, more families were found
trapped in small tracts of land, indicating that the emergency was far from over. A team from UNICEF soon arrived by boat with essential medical supplies and services, including vaccines.

October also saw large numbers of displaced people returning to their places of origin. Over 90 per cent of those affected in KP and Punjab provinces returned to their homes, and 60 per cent of those affected in Balochistan and Sindh provinces started the return process. Most found their area of origin, health centers, schools and shops partially or completely destroyed. Both the government and the humanitarian community launched early recovery efforts. Repair of water sources and distribution of winter survival kits to far flung areas received extra focus at this time. UNICEF-supported WASH, Education, Nutrition and Child Protection clusters were operating at full capacity with over 60 dedicated cluster staff working to ensure that efforts from the multiple responding agencies were well coordinated and communicated. By the end of October, 250 new UNICEF staff had been recruited to respond to the emergency.

November 2010

November brought with it new threats, especially for those living in the north. As winter drew near, temperatures dropped and snow began to fall, posing new dangers to health and access. A rise in cases of acute respiratory infections caused major concerns. Children who had been with little food for months became more malnourished and less able to fight diseases and infections. Following a successful government cash transfer scheme to 1.2 million people, there was a huge population movement, making it harder to track those who still needed services. Up until this time, residual flood waters in Sindh had prevented the return of many families. Families returned to their villages, salvaging what they could find among the rubble and mud. Increased child labour and school drop outs were feared as families started to rebuild, and many looked for any source of income or labour. UNICEF responded by scaling up protective services for children.

The November 2010 Damage and Needs Assessment conducted by the Government of Pakistan, World Bank and Asian Development Bank estimated overall flood recovery and construction costs between US$ 8 to 10 billion. The same assessment found five per cent of health facilities and six per cent of education institutions completely destroyed or partially damaged. UNICEF's winter survival strategy, drafted as early as September, was now well advanced with distribution of sweaters, blankets, shoes, solar lamps, lanterns, torches and food carriers.

December 2010

December saw a sharp drop in temperatures and increased snowfall in northern Pakistan, making the need for shelter, safe drinking water, food and healthcare more acute. In Sindh, flood-displaced families continued to move back to their areas of origin as waters receded and access improved. Of the 4,800 camps identified in the province in October, just 325 remained open, accommodating roughly 130,000 people. As most had returned to their communities in December, school buildings that were damaged or used as relief centers needed to be repaired and refurbished so that children could go back to school.

January 2011

In January, flood affected people in Sindh continue to return to their places of origin in Jamshoro, Thatta and Dadu as access improves. However, many people remain in camps or spontaneous settlements in return areas, sometimes with no water facilities, shelter or food supplies. The number of acute respiratory infections continues to rise, making up 32 per cent of all health consultations. Newspaper reports in January also revealed that flood and conflict displacement have led to an increase in child labor and begging.
An evolving emergency

At present, UNICEF continues to deliver goods and services to flood and crises-affected children and women throughout Pakistan, paying particular attention to over 650,000 relocated people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. While donations helped close the gap in provision of services to the most vulnerable, significant gaps remain.

Throughout the six months of the emergency response, UNICEF has faced great challenges. The scale of the response required, the difficulties in accessing and assessing affected populations, the slow pace of donations, the geographic spread of the floods and continuing population movements were a few of these. Pre-existing development challenges and conflicts, as well as the lack of updated baseline data and implementing partners capable of responding to such a large scale emergency, have posed another level of difficulty. The evolving needs on the ground necessitated all responders to both act and adapt, fast.

Six months after the floods, the emergency continues to evolve as new issues come to light. One of the most urgent issues now facing the women and children of Pakistan is the alarming levels of malnutrition among flood affected populations.

The emergency interventions have entailed new opportunities, which now require critical and urgent attention. For example, children who had not had a chance to go to school could access new learning experiences in temporary learning spaces in camps and host communities. Many of them are in fear of not being able to continue their education, now that they have gone back to their communities and found their schools completely destroyed, or returned to villages that never had schools.

The scale and urgency of this crisis can be seen in these facts: if you had told me six weeks ago that there was going to be a major natural disaster, but that in the first month UNICEF and its partners were going to provide two million people with clean water and would immunize hundreds of thousands of children, I would have said that we would already be on top of the situation.

Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director
Islamabad, 31 August 2010
Outpouring of support

While the world watched the emergency unfold, the humanitarian community appealed for sustained funding. The response was slow at first, with people not fully comprehending the extent of the impact of the floods as they ravaged the country.

During this crisis, UNICEF far surpassed response targets set for previous major disasters. As early as the first week of the floods, UNICEF quickly released internal emergency programme loans, reallocated some of its resources amounting to US$2 million, and activated emergency partnership agreements to begin work on the ground. Funding made a leap of US$20 million between the second and third week of August, though most of them were pledges. The main increase in funding was seen in September, when US$33 million arrived in one week after the visit of Regional Director Daniel Toole and the launch of the revised appeal in New York. Daniel Toole gave several media interviews and wrote a blog post that carried a clear message: we need cash, not pledges. It was well received not only in traditional media channels, but in social media as well. The message was heard and funding started to increase.

By September 15, UNICEF had received US$92 million in donations and US$23 million in pledges, totaling US$115 million. By the middle of October, UNICEF had received US$129 million. By late November, this had increased to US$169 million. To date, UNICEF has received US$198 million in donations and pledges out of the US$251 million required. As UNICEF continues much needed relief and early recovery, a funding gap of 21 per cent remains, with US$52 million still needed to respond to significant child rights concerns.

Six months on, as the emergency phase winds down and early recovery efforts are under way, UNICEF sees an opening to turn tragedy into opportunity, and begin the process of healing for many of Pakistan’s children.
Fulfilling core commitments: UNICEF in action

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Before the floods, many of Pakistan’s water and sanitation facilities were in poor condition. About 42 per cent of the population did not have access to toilets. The floods swept away the few facilities functioning in the north, and inundated those in the south. During the immediate response, UNICEF prioritized the construction of emergency latrines, defecation trenches, and provision of bathing cubicles. By September, over 680 water tanker trucks were travelling through the flood affected areas daily to provide safe water. As time progressed, delivery strategies were modified as families returned to their homes, and rehabilitation of water systems took priority.

Today, UNICEF is supplying clean drinking water to nearly 3.5 million people daily through water filtration, restored water systems and tanker trucks. As people return to their places of origin and more water points and schemes are restored and installed, water trucking has been scaled down. Since the onset of the emergency, UNICEF has distributed nearly 30 million water purification tablets and household treatment filters to provide 300 million liters of safe drinking water. UNICEF has provided nearly 30,000 sanitation facilities benefiting nearly 1.5 million people. Hygiene promotion messages have reached over 1.9 million individuals and non-food related items have been distributed, including water containers and one million bars of soap.

UNICEF continues to lead the WASH cluster, which has 172 members. The government has finalized its WASH strategy and has shared it with the main WASH agencies in the country.

Education

For the first month of the emergency, education activities were limited as humanitarian attention focused on urgent survival measures in health, water, shelter and food. However, more than 1.8 million children were in danger of not being able to go back to school, with 16,400 schools damaged or being used as temporary shelters. The floods dealt a particularly heavy blow to the schooling of girls, who are expected to look after their brothers and sisters and help with household chores, rather than go to school.

Restoring access to education scaled up quickly. The numbers of UNICEF-supported temporary learning centers were at 98 in September, growing to 722 in
Six Months After the Floods • 9

the floods a confluence of protection concerns arose: children experienced profound stress, were forced to deal with hunger, disease and the destruction that surrounded them, and became more at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

Girls and women became particularly vulnerable at this time. Girls were at risk of being married off so that there would be fewer mouths to feed, or recruited as servants where extra help in the household was needed. Families were living together in tents, making it hard for women to breastfeed their children in privacy. Cultural taboos further impeded women and girls from accessing provisions and services.

UNICEF's child protection response throughout the six months included delivery of psychosocial and recreational services through the Child Friendly Spaces (CFS). In September, UNICEF and its partner NGOs were able to put up 160 mobile and static CFS, increasing to 260 in October, 300 in November to nearly 1,000 at present – bringing the total number of children assisted to 180,000. Shoes, clothes, blankets and other items were distributed to around 15,000 women and children in September, increasing to over 302,000 in January. Over the last six months, UNICEF has also established 967 Child Protection Committees, safe spaces for women, child protection units and encouraged increased birth registration. UNICEF has also

October, 1,550 in November and to 2,600 today, bringing the total number of children receiving assistance to 199,400. School supplies were procured in September and distributed to 150,000 children and women by November. To date, around 258,800 children have benefited from these supplies, including school-in-a-box, recreation and early childhood development kits.

UNICEF used its technical expertise to support training for 1,300 teachers in November and has increased it to 3,700 at present.

UNICEF and Save the Children UK continue to work together as co-leaders of the Education cluster. The cluster members together have reached a total of 300,000 children, rehabilitated 360 schools and built 54 transitional school shelters to temporarily replace fully damaged schools.

As confirmed from assessments, school supplies and teacher training are the most urgent gaps that still need to be addressed in terms of education. Some schools also continue to be used as relief centers.

Child Protection

Protection risks for children and women became greater during the floods, exacerbating existing risks. Prior to the floods, around 32 per cent of girls were married before they reached 18, and 3.3 million children under 14 years of age were engaged in child labour. During
supported individual and group counselling for women and children found to be in profound stress. Unaccompanied and separated children have also been reunited with their respective families and relatives.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, families face a myriad of problems. Affected families cannot return to their homes because of the harsh winter weather, conflict and lack of basic infrastructure and services. Compounding the problem is the receding waters that have exposed previously hidden unexploded ordnance and landmines. Naturally curious, children have played with them, severely injuring three children. UNICEF is been conducting mine awareness campaigns in the area to educate families on how to identify unexploded ordnance and report them to authorities.

**Health**

UNICEF’s health response activities during the flood emergency have included large-scale measles and polio vaccinations and vitamin A supplementation. To date, UNICEF and partners have immunized around 9.6 million children against polio, 8.6 million against measles and distributed 940,000 treated bednets to protect pregnant and lactating women and children under five from malaria.

A massive mobilization of 44,000 Lady Health Workers (LHWs) was undertaken to distribute medical supplies and spread health messages across the flood-affected areas, despite some of the LHW themselves being affected by the flood. LHWs are community-based health workers who conduct door-to-door outreach, give intensive health, hygiene and nutrition promotion activities through counselling sessions, provide demonstrations on using oral rehydration salts for the treatment of diarrhoea and deliver critical, life-saving messages about prevention of communicable diseases such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, skin infections and malaria.

To address the lack of access to basic health services for mothers, UNICEF increased the use of ‘Mother and Child Health Week’ campaigns to deliver packages of high-impact, low-cost child survival interventions. During the campaign, children – especially in rural areas – receive immunizations and de-worming medicines. Mothers were counseled on household practices like breastfeeding and basic hygiene, how to identify and treat diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhoea, where to go for supplementary feeding or malnutrition treatment, and where to refer their children if they fall ill.

A special Mother and Child Health Week was conducted in September for 24 flood-affected districts across all four provinces in Pakistan. During this week, two
were distributed in this single campaign, aside from hygiene, newborn and clean delivery kits. At present, the health cluster members together have delivered sufficient essential medicines to cover the needs of 9.2 million people across flood affected areas.

“UNICEF is ramping up its relief operation for the millions of people affected by the flooding in Pakistan. Many of those are children who are especially vulnerable to disease and the present harsh conditions. They need water, medicine, food and shelter urgently. Our immediate priority is to reach all those hit by the flooding especially those in the most remote areas.”

Martin Mogwanja, Former UNICEF Representative in Pakistan
Islamabad, 6 August 2010
Nutrition in focus: responding to a critical situation

The nutrition situation in Pakistan has been an issue of serious concern for close to a decade, particularly among children under five years old. The country’s multiple and recurring emergencies, combined with inadequate infant and young child feeding practices and high incidence of diseases has undermined the nutritional well-being of Pakistan’s children.

Six months after the floods, UNICEF and its partners face another huge challenge following new survey results, sponsored by UNICEF, from Sindh and Punjab provinces that revealed critical levels of malnutrition among flood affected children.

Data released in late January 2011 by the Sindh Department of Health indicates malnutrition at or beyond emergency threshold levels, with a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 23.1 per cent in Northern Sindh and 21.2 per cent in Southern Sindh. The World Health Organization (WHO) gives 15 per cent as the emergency threshold level to trigger a humanitarian response. Furthermore, records from Northern Sindh reveal a Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rate of 6.1 per cent, posing an immediate threat to the lives of 61,000 children.

Data released from the Punjab Department of Health, on the other hand, revealed a Global Acute Malnutrition rate of 14 per cent, just below the emergency level. The Severe Acute Malnutrition rate reached 3.6 per cent, indicating a high prevalence of malnutrition among children. Survey results from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan Provinces are expected in early February 2011.

Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) reveals how many children in a given population are moderately and severely malnourished, and have not gained the required weight for their height. Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is an advanced state of acute malnutrition which develops when the body does not get the right amount of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients needed to maintain normal body functions. Children with SAM need immediate treatment and are ten times more likely to die before they reach their fifth birthday than healthy children. If they do survive, their development and learning is poor and their income earning potential as adults is reduced.
UNICEF assisted the Sindh and Punjab Departments of Health with robust response plans to focus on malnutrition management and prevention covering a period of 18 months.

As cluster lead, UNICEF is also working with around 70 government and NGO partners for the nutrition response. From the flood-affected population, UNICEF and the Nutrition Cluster identified an annual target to treat 75,600 severely malnourished children and 180,000 moderately malnourished children by July 2011. This is in addition to the targeted 857,000 children aged 6-23 months at risk of malnutrition and in need of a targeted intervention package. By mid-January, 41 per cent of the annual target of severely malnourished children had been reached, 38 per cent of the target of moderately malnourished children and 82.7 per cent of the targeted at risk group. UNICEF is working with partners to scale up treatment by conducting training for community and clinical workers who, up until recently, have had little exposure to malnutrition training.

Around 47,000 pregnant and lactating women have been enrolled in a supplementary nutrition programme. A network of 425 outpatient therapeutic programmes (treatment programme for the severely malnourished with no medical complications) and 411 supplementary feeding programmes (rehabilitation programme for the moderately malnourished with no medical complications) have also been established to reach the target numbers of malnourished children. Outreach activities include teaching communities about proper nutrition, as well as identifying and referring malnourished children to health workers and feeding programmes. About 8.5 million children have also received Vitamin A supplementation.

UNICEF’s nutrition interventions over the six months of the flood response include supplying all therapeutic programme supplies for severely malnourished children. UNICEF also provides systematic treatment drugs used in the management of malnutrition among children, technical support to the nutrition strategy implementation and operating costs to keep the nutrition programme running smoothly.

Through its leadership of the Nutrition cluster, UNICEF identified and engaged cluster coordinators and information management officers to facilitate regular information sharing, analyze gaps and coverage, build partnerships, mobilize resources and enhance capacity. UNICEF has also provided capacity strengthening within the cluster which includes training, mentoring, field exposure visits and providing guidelines for action.
Feeding a child, saving a life

By Naveen Qayyum

Three year old Abdul is a friendly child. He usually smiles at people, and cries only when he sees too many unfamiliar faces around him. Sitting calmly on his mother’s lap, chewing on a small piece of carrot, no one can guess how his life was saved in a most profound way.

Six months after the floods, Abdul’s family is struggling to readjust to life back home. They live in Sardarpur village in Sindh province, where the floods displaced around 2000 inhabitants last year. They returned home two months back but they still live in a tent shelter. The land Abdul’s father, Maula Bakhsh, used to cultivate is no longer fertile. There is little food for the family and Abdul is already weak, having lived in a relief camp for three months.

Screening for malnourished children

Abdul was identified in October as a malnourished child by Nighat Parveen, a Lady Health Worker (LHW) working for UNICEF’s programme to provide supplementary food to malnourished children. In Sardarpur, this initiative is managed by UNICEF’s partner Save the Children, where Nighat works as staff in the Community Outreach Programme. She visits communities and screens children for malnutrition. She refers these children to government basic health units so that they can be provided with supplementary food and vaccinations if required.

Nighat found Abdul to be in immediate need of help. “We went to Abdul’s house in October last year. We measured his Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), a standard way of determining if a child is malnourished. Abdul’s MUAC was 10.4, much less than a healthy child. His weight was only 9.4 kg and he had a poor appetite,” said Nighat.

The miracle of supplementary food

After being diagnosed as severely malnourished, Abdul was enrolled in an Outpatient Therapeutic Programme, where acutely malnourished children are provided with micronutrient supplementary food. Abdul was given plumpy’nut, a ready-to-use food which gives children basic nutrients to improve their health. Its quantity usually varies according to a child’s weight; Abdul was given around 25 packets per week.

“Once we started giving supplementary food to Abdul, we monitored improvements in his health every week. After one month, we found his weight had improved to 10.3 kg. We were glad to see some progress. We then moved Abdul to our Supplementary Feeding Programme and continued giving him regular doses of plumpy’nut,” says Nighat.

Becoming healthy and stable

After Abdul was brought to the basic health unit by his mother for a check-up, there was good progress in his health. When Nighat measured his MUAC, it was 13.5 and his weight had increased to 10.9 kg. “I am so glad to see this progress in Abdul’s health. Therapeutic feeding has done a miraculous job for him. Now you can see he is a normal child,” said Nighat proudly. Abdul’s mother was very happy to see him grow. Abdul’s parents and staff working to treat him were all amazed how positively he responded to the feeding.

Abdul during his recent check-up.
Looking back: revisiting children six months on

Throughout the six months of the response, UNICEF has told the stories of many children who have suffered as a result of losing their loved ones, their homes and their schools. UNICEF went back to find these children to see how they are doing six months after the floods struck. Here are the stories of Sobia and Umair, children who have been reached with the support of the many UNICEF donors and supporters throughout the world.

The stories of Sobia and Umair:
a future filled with promise

By Shandana Aurangzeb Durrani

Sobia, 14
October 2010

Sobia, 14 years old, is living in the same camp with her husband and in-laws. The young expectant mother has never been to school and was married when she was barely thirteen. It is hard to believe that she is nearly eight months pregnant, but that is what her medical reports states. Sobia is living in one of the tents in the camp with her young husband, widowed father-in-law and his younger children. Very quiet and withdrawn, she is too shy to speak but the ravages of the floods are evident from her face. Suffering from severe anaemia and exhaustion, her eyes are completely devoid of any expression. Her father-in-law, Noor Uddin tells us, “My wife died last year and there was no one to look after my young children. I married off my eldest son, 18 year old Rooh Ullah so that his wife could look after the home and my children.” With tears in his eyes he adds “I have lost everything. Whatever I had saved for my son’s wedding was also lost. Many families have gone back and are rebuilding their homes but I am a poor man and have no resources to restart my life. I don’t know how I will look after my family”.

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“My beautiful daughter will go to school and do a job”, wishes fourteen year old Sobia, looking down lovingly at two and a half month old Hasreena. “I will make sure that she is not married at an early age. She will not suffer like me,” she adds with determination. Sobia, her young husband, Rooh Ullah and his family had lost all their household belongings when their rented house in Charsaddah in north western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was washed away last year in the worst monsoon floods to hit the country. At the time Sobia was eight months pregnant, severally anaemic and under weight. Her family had to move six times in the past six months, taking refuge in three different camps and two different rented accommodations. They are now living in a room provided by their relatives. During this difficult time, child psychologist
Nida Khan from Job Creation and Development Society (JCDS) an NGO and UNICEF partner has played a critical role in Sobia’s life. Her regular psychosocial support and her organisation’s strong child protection monitoring network ensured that Sobia could cope with the traumatic experiences and had access to life saving medical services. Her daughter was delivered safely in a public sector hospital in the nearby provincial capital Peshawar.

“The family was constantly on the move. It was very difficult to keep track and support them. But I am so happy that all the hard work is paying off. The young couple is coping well and looking ahead to a prosperous future with their daughter,” says Nida Khan. “The young parents were provided intensive psychosocial counselling. Having a baby at such a young age and under very difficult circumstances has been very traumatic for Sobia as well as Rooh Ullah, who started taking drugs,” adds Ms. Khan. Through the UNICEF-supported Child Protection monitoring and referral system, the young man is now in a drug rehabilitation programme. “I feel much better. I go to work and provide for my wife and daughter,” says Rooh Ullah proudly. “I hope one day I will build a home where we can live safely,” he adds.
Umair, 7
October 2010

Umair, seven years old, sits with Ms. Nighat Sultan, a child psychologist, in a child friendly space in a football ground camp in Charsadda district, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan.

“Umair is severely traumatised. He lost his mother in the recent floods,” says Ms. Sultan. Umair and his mother, Uzlefat, a widow, lived with her mother and brothers in Kharbela village, Union Council Prang, an area badly damaged by the floods. Umair lost his father a few years back but his mother and maternal relatives took care of him. He was studying in Grade 2 before the devastating floods completely destroyed the family house and his life.

“While Umair and his mother were still inside their mud house, the roof collapsed on top of them. Umair survived but his mother was hurt and later died because of complications as she was suffering from Hepatitis C,” says Ms. Sultan.

Ms. Sultan adds, “Umair was identified in the camp by our Child Protection Monitor. He was withdrawn and mute and would turn very aggressive if approached.” With intensive psychosocial support, including counselling sessions and play therapy at the UNICEF supported Child Friendly Space in Football Ground Camp Prang, his condition has improved.

At the child friendly space, Umair is more interactive and likes to take part in different activities, but becomes tearful and anxious if his mother is mentioned. “Losing his mother and home and the protective extended family network has been very traumatic. He needs regular psychosocial support otherwise it will be extremely difficult for him to cope and lead a normal life, said Ms. Sultan.”

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In a nearby UNICEF-supported Child Protection Center, seven year old Umair plays happily. Umair, whose father died a few years back, now lives with his maternal grandmother and extended family. “Umair was very disturbed when he returned to the village. His small mud house was completely razed to the ground. He was phobic, withdrawn and aggressive,” informs Ms. Sania Gul, child psychologist at the Center. “But look at him now. It’s hard to believe it is the same Umair. He goes to school now and comes to the Center regularly, where through play therapy and group counselling his emotional condition has improved remarkably,” adds Ms. Gul. “I like drawing and playing on the swings,” says Umair. “I miss my mother but love my grandmother. I will become a doctor and look after her,” he adds.

“It has been very difficult looking after him,” says the old Shamuna Fazle Maula, Umair’s grandmother, whose eyesight has been badly affected after floods. “I love him dearly, as he is the only reminder of my daughter. I hope I live long enough to see him stand on his feet,” she adds tearfully.
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