

## **The Canadian Food Grains Bank Project in Pakistan**

*by Fred Knip*

The people of Pakistan have asked me to extend thanks to all the people from Canada who gave money to the Canadian Food Grains Bank which enabled the funding of this project.

The province of Baluchistan is located in the southern province of Pakistan where the ruling military Government has marginalized the inhabitants (Baloch). Since the 1940s attempts have been made to assimilate the Baloch nationals into the Pakistan National Islamic society by abolishing the rights of feudal chiefs, using military intervention and biased legislation that led to considerable central government violence against the Baloch people which continue to the present day.

The climate in the province in Baluchistan is severe; going from plus 50 in the summer to five in the winter. Human settlement is clustered around oasis near rivers that draw on underground water coming from the Himalayan Mountains. In the area a average household would have 7 to 8 persons. A typical farmer owns 3 acres for cropping land and each piece of land has date trees around the perimeter for cash crop. Two crops are grown each year. Additionally each farmer also had 5 to 10 goats, five chickens, 1 donkey and about one in 10 had a milk cow.

When Cyclone Yemyin came it came with vengeance and up to 7 feet of rain fell. The rain added to the watershed which all then carried down stream towards the town of Turbat. At 11:00 PM, the water reached Turbat filling up the reservoir, where these people lived and farmed, with no warning. All the people of Turbat evacuated to the little higher ground that was left. Many people drowned and no time was available to rescue their possessions. Some small hills were so crowded of people that people slipped off into the dark waters. Then at four in the morning, due to poor design of the dam, the water burst around the sides and released the waters much to the surprising survivors. This quick release of water did the most damage. Erosion by the extreme force of the water took down houses, Mosques, schools, public buildings, small bridges and the road infrastructure. While some infrastructure, such as newer bridges, survived they were rendered useless as the infrastructure around the newer installation didn't survive. As a result there is now bridges that lead to nowhere as the road around the bridges were destroyed.

The task for the people of Turbat in the aftermath of Cyclone Yemyin is unbelievable. They recognize that they were living in the 18th century but Cyclone Yemyin relegated them to the Stone Age. Whole sections of the village are gone. People are starting to move back to where they used to live taking their tents; their only possessions. Others are staying put on higher ground far away from their home location fearing another catastrophe. All of their possessions are waterlogged or buried; mattresses, furniture, clothes and sacks of grain are lost. There is a need for blankets, beds, cooking utensils or help renting a tractor to move the larger items and clear the land. The Government of Pakistan is choosing to ignore the plight of these politically non- important people in this rouge Baluchistan Province.

The CFGB food-for-work project provided food and tools for 2,000 households. I-LAP and CRWRC also received additional funding from CFGB for tractor, trailer and loader time of 11,500 hours to help remove the sediment that was left behind by the flooding. Additionally the irrigation channels were clogged with sediment and needed a great deal of work to become fully functional.

In addition to rebuilding agriculture there needs to be rebuilding of houses. Only a few have tents to live in so living for many is outside under the beating sun during the summer months. The tents are also very hot as the original housing is mud brick, which stays cooler. There is also concern for the cold winter months when the temperatures drop to a low of 5 degrees.

There are many needs that still need to be resolved so during a Canadian Food Grains collection give generously because for every dollar collected the Canadian Government matches your dollar by another four dollars through funds by the Canadian International Development Association. A good way to help spread God's love to humankind is through CFGB giving.



**A distribution in Koshkolat Pakistan.**