



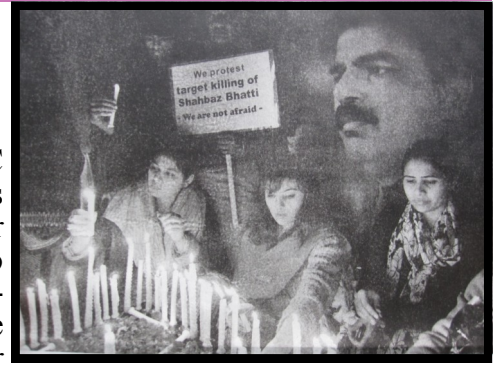
CRWRC

CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

# Geo and Toni in Pakistan

March 24, 2011

CRWRC Disaster Relief Pakistan Flood Project



Lighting candles in memory of Shabbaz Bhatti - Christian Minister of Minorities

Spring has arrived in Islamabad like a lion! From 16°C (day) and 4°C (night) the day temperature highs are now +30° (14° night). So the gas heaters are off until next winter replaced with fans and AC. The time for picnics is now as soon it will be too hot to be outdoors. The men are no longer wearing their 'blankets' or chaddars and the women are anticipating new spring fabrics or "lawn" as it is called here. Doting the city are numerous fabric stores as women and men select the fabrics and trim for new outfits. The selections are breathtaking and sometimes it is easier to purchase a 'ready-made' outfit. As we witness the wonder of spring in the flowers and new leaves, we are also silent before the power of nature as unleashed in Japan and lift our prayers for comfort and relief for the people of Japan. Here in Pakistan the nation mourned the assassination of its only ever Christian Cabinet Member - the Minister of Minorities. Spreading his message of Interfaith Harmony, he became known as peace-maker throughout the world even as here in Pakistan his message was seen as anti-Muslim. Despite death threats, Bhatti decided to stay in Pakistan and be a voice for the voiceless and work for a Pakistan that embraced all faiths and cultures. Pray for the many brave people who dare raise their voices for the minorities and for the many poor of Pakistan.

We are grateful that despite the turmoil in the country the work of assisting some of the 20 million flood affected people continues. The next phase of the work here is to assist small farmers who have one to 1 1/2 acres of land to plant. Although some own this land, most are crop-sharers who must pay back half their harvest to the large landowners who own most of the land in Pakistan. Two thousand farming households have been targeted for this program in one of the poorest areas of KPK Province. As the cold winter days and nights change to the heat of summer, the farmers are getting ready to prepare their fields for planting. By providing seed and tools to these farmers they do not have to borrow money from loan sharks to plant the spring crop. By providing half rations of food and through a cash-for-work program, these families will also be able to provide for other necessities for their families as they wait for the harvest. The cash-for-work program will have the farmers working to repair some of the many irrigation canals that were destroyed in the flood waters. Without the water from the irrigation system the crops will not grow as they cannot depend on rain. It is indeed amazing how many different crops can be grown in Pakistan but without repair to the irrigation system, without fertilizer, without assistance to make this happen, the poor farming communities will not be able to provide for their families. International aid combined with the donations to the many INGO/NGO (International Non-Government Organizations/National Non-Government Organizations) who are working here have made it possible to affect the lives of about 1.4 million people - an amazing amount of people assisted in some way but still short of reaching all of the 20 million affected.



## You know you are in Pakistan when. . .

- The water out of the taps in Islamabad has an 80% chance of having e-coli. 50% of bottled water contains e-coli. 44 million do not have access to safe drinking water.
- Hair transplant labs are popular - new head of hair for \$1,000—no, George is not going for it!
- Many men colour their hair and beards with henna—bright orange!
- Cars parked illegally at the airport are picked up and moved onto sidewalk or medium with forklift
- Pakistanis ask if they can take our photographs—payback for all the photos we take of others in foreign countries
- You experience earth tremors—Islamabad is on a fault line. We had quite a shaking on Monday!
- At meetings or in the office it is always a young man running around serving coffee/tea—lots of milk and sugar
- Complete ban on flying kites in cities as being too dangerous - the coated string can cut throats, can electrocute via power lines, cause death from falls off roofs, or deaths from vehicles when they run into traffic.
- From local paper - *Half of the toilets of AC (Business) class have been fitted with the western-type commode. All the passengers were of the view that it would be in fitness of things if all the toilets are fitted with eastern-type commode with Muslim-showers. At present almost all the passengers use western type commode by putting their feet on top of its brim. Resultantly, it becomes unusable even for a person desirous of using it in western style.*



Family car!

Prayers for I-LAP as they continue to strive for Interfaith Peace and Harmony in Pakistan



Wheelbarrows are borrowed to take the food from the distribution place home



You can see the mark the water left on the second story of this home



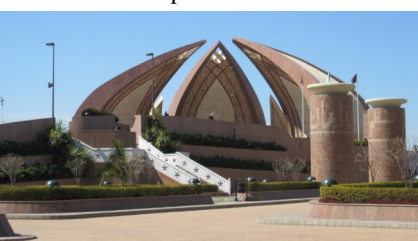
Kabul River a block from house above



St. Thomas Anglican Church



The Faisal Mosque



The Pakistani Monument

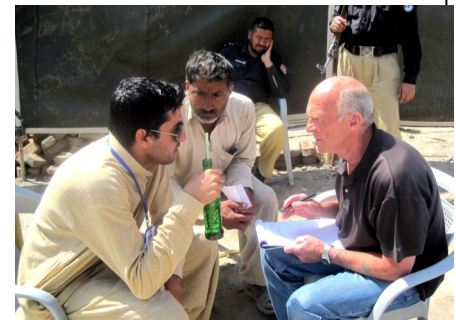


One of our assignments is to ensure that the food for distribution is stored in a secure warehouse and the food meets certain health standards. So George visited the warehouse in Islamabad and witnessed the testing of the rice, flour, oil and lentils which was to be distributed this month - see picture of the food inspectors taking sample of rice to be tested. On the last trip to KPK George visited the warehouse there as well and followed the food to the villages where it was distributed to 4,000 households over 3 days. The following interview with Sirbiland explains the importance of continuing relief past the Emergency Phase as people struggle to get back to where they were before the floods.

The devastating flooding conditions raised powerful rushing water up to a level of 16 feet in the community of Kabul River along the banks of the Kabul river in the summer of 2010. Sirbiland heard rumours of the pending disaster and gathered his 9 children and 32 year old wife to walk the 10 kilometers to another village where they found refuge for 13 days while the flooding ceased and the waters receded. The rapid and unexpected onset of the disaster left them with the only option of fleeing with only what they were wearing and with no opportunity to free their herd of 30 water buffalo. It is quite common for a 35 year old father and 32 year old wife to be raising a family of 9 children in the province of Peshawar which is known for its conservative Muslim customs where the women are seldom seen in public and where it is common for them to begin bearing children at the age of 12 to 13. These are also the numerous families that constantly "pull our heart strings" as we experience them as peace loving, hospital, generous, and kind people stoically working towards returning to their simple lives before the disaster.

During the eighteen years before the flood, Sirbiland and his five brothers worked diligently to develop a herd of 30 water buffalo into a successful milk sales business. The extended family of 41 people occupied a 15 room house on the 5 Canals (8 Canals to the acre) they had inherited from their parents. The 10 to 15 thousand rupees (about \$175 US) each of the five brothers were able to earn per month had been barely sufficient to meet the needs of these families. The flood changed their lives dramatically when, upon their return after the waters receded, they discovered that all but 3 of the buffalo had perished and their home had been rendered inhabitable and in need of extensive repairs. The loss of their only source of income has rendered these families entirely dependent on the goodwill of humanitarian agencies such as CRWRC and I-LAP. During the initial Emergency Phase of the project, 8000 households in Nowshera and Charsadda districts of KPK were provided with tents, winter NFIs (blankets, bedding, winter clothing, cooking stoves, fuel). We are currently managing the second (Early Recovery) phase in Nowshera, the more needy of these districts. These 4,000 households continue to receive monthly half-rations of wheat flour, sugar, cooking oil, salt, tea, rice and lentils. We have also assisted I-LAP staff with initiating the formation of 50 CBOs (Community Based Organizations) which will become the structure for the launching of a cash for work program (repairing irrigation canals) and the provision of crop (Maize) seed and fertilizers for the next planting season (May 15 to 30). Before completing our work here at the end of May we are also helping with the preparation work for another (recovery) Phase III, which will focus on Shelter (Housing) rehabilitation, possible animal husbandry (replacement) and a much needed water and sanitation component. The need for clean water, sanitation (latrines) public health education remains a high priority with water born diseases continuing to remain an extreme risk factor, especially among the children.

At the end of the interview as Sirbiland took my hand in his strong, rough hardened through labour conditioned hand, shook it firmly and expressed his appreciation and hope for the return to his pre-flood livelihood, the tears in his eyes "said it all".



On weekends we are able to use one of the project cars and see a bit more of Islamabad. On Sundays we attend the Anglican Church which has services in Urdu and English. The church is surrounded by a high wall and the entrance is closely guarded by the police and one needs to be frisked and bags checked to enter. We have also visited the Faisal Mosque with two Dutchmen from the INGO Word and Deed. This mosque is one of the largest in the world (the largest in Pakistan and South Asia and can hold 10,000 worshippers in the main hall; 100,000 total). We also visited the Pakistani Monument and met numerous student groups who wanted to have their pictures taken with us and to practice their English.

