



# GPP Rapid Assessment Report

## *Flood in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan*

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## Executive Summary

Thousands of villagers in risk of losing their homes to a lake formed by a landslide which could burst its banks within days, the possible massive flood could affect more than 50,000 people in northern Pakistan. According to administration at least 36 villages situated from Hunza and Gilgit may possibly be affected with the overspill. Up till now, due to the rising level of water in the lake about 2000 people have been forced to flee their homes and flooding has already swept Ayeenabad and Shishkat villages in the district of Hunza, wiping out dozens of houses about 750 kilometres (467 miles) north of Islamabad.

The rising water level in the lake has already covered many villages leaving around 2000 people homeless with little resources to survive the crises that does not seem ending soon. Although government officials have evacuated some of the schools for flood affected people to live in, yet many of them are forced to live under open sky. There is a severe shortage of edibles, tents, medicines, as well as of POL. The efforts of government in this regards just seems not enough to fulfill the needs of the flood affected people of the area.



**4 Jan 2010** - A massive landslide hit Hunza district followed by boulders and rocks sliding into two villages. As of 7 January, over 1,600 people registered in camps and host families, 15 reported killed and 34 houses destroyed.

Map Sources: UNCS, PPRC.  
References: PRCIS, Pakistan: PRCIS Humanitarian Operation in Tehsil Hunza (Gilgit-Baltistan), Situation Report 2, 11 Jan 2010.

## Background of the issue

In last January, a land sliding, sweeping out 2 villages and causing 20 lives blocked the passage of Hunza River and formed a 25 kilometer long and 350 meters wide lake. This newly formed lake has already flooded 6 villages and has made around 2000 people to leave their homes in search of safe places.

The water level in the lake is increasing with an alarming pace posing a threat of fierce flood in the area. According to the experts, it would take more than two weeks to clear the passage of the river while the lake can burst anytime after May 20. At bursting the lake, there is a threat that more than 36 villages along with the major town of Gulmit would be drowned affecting at least 50,000 lives. Although the engineering core of Pakistan army is trying its best

### Landslide as source of lake

to open the water passage, however, considering the pace of work due to an extremely difficult terrain the flood seems inevitable.

Rising temperature is causing the glaciers to melt fast which has increased the pace by which water is coming down to the lake. In last 24 hours alone the water level in the lake has risen up to 10 feet, causing severe pressure upon its banks to burst. The experts are expecting the lake banks to break any time after May 20, causing a hundred feet high flood wave which would ruin and demolish everything which would come its way up to 250 kilometers.

## Geographical Area

Gilgit, situated at a distance of 750 kilometers from Islamabad, is the capital city of northern areas of Pakistan spread upon an area of 38,000 kilometers. The region is significantly mountainous with an average altitude of 1500 meters (4,900 ft). The average rain and snow fall is quite high owing to which there are many streams and rivers which flow from the area.



The biggest river in the region is known as Hunza River which forms and adds up to great Sindh River.

Following the road from Islamabad to Gilgit, the nearest town named Jaglot is around 50 kilometers from the Gilgit city; however, since currently the Gilgit city itself is quite safe from the threat of possible flood as well as the roads which lead to the city, supplying the relief items to the affected area would not be difficult. The Gilgit air port is also quite safe from the danger and can extend help in supplying the relief items to the area quite fast.

Lake covering the residential area and destroying the infrastructure & means of Communication

## Impact of Possible Flooding



People fleeing to safety as water level rise in Lake formed by Massive Landslide in Jan 2010

The water level in the lake formed at Hunza River is increasing with a pace of 2500 cubic meter per day while it has already covered an area which is 25 kilometers long and 350 meters wide. In case the lake pours out of its banks, for which there is a strong probability that it would, there would be immense damage to the property, lives, and animals and to the agriculture of the area. More than 36 villages along

with some major towns would need to be evacuated causing more than 50,000 people to suffer and to be displaced. Although the government officials are claiming to have made all the necessary measures to cope with the possible flood, however the common people do not feel like believing them as according to them the government is just overlooking the severity of the possible danger and the preparation it is making to serve the people is just not sufficient to meet and survive the inevitable flood. Moreover, unfortunately, the non-government organizations are also hesitant in visiting the area as extending help to such a rough terrain needs some real efforts on their part.

While making essential arrangements for the possible flood affected people, there is a dire need to make an early preparation so that the required help can be extended quite well on time. The goods which would be required for flood affected people include food and non food items, tents, blankets, medicines, and hygiene kits.

### **Affected population**



**Affected Families settled in Schools**

The formation of lake owing to land sliding has already caused 20 people to die and around 2000 people to flee from their homes, while considering the severity of the danger the nearby population is still evacuating their houses along with their animals. The government officials are of the view that the number of displaced people would mount to a figure of 14000, while the experts from independent institutions think that this

number can easily go up to 30,000. Since 78 percent of the population in the area

comprises of women, children and old people, they would be the major affectees of the disaster. After the flood, which has become quite inevitable, it would take at least 2 months for the displaced people to settle down again at their places.

## Snap Shot of Hunza Situation



Courtesy PTimes  
Debris Cleaning carried out by FWO near the Lake formed at Hunza



People gathered at Land sliding site



Labor working the transport material to safety



People gathering and storing material



Destroyed Houses at Attabad, Huna Valley



Ariel View of the lake formed source web

## **Vital Needs and Current Situation**

For already internally displaced population caused by the rising water level in the lake, which, according to the latest updates has reached to 10, 000, there is an acute shortage of drinking water, food, cooking utensils along with fuel, clothing, tents and medicines. Although the federal government is claiming to make all of its efforts to fulfill the needs of the affected people, however the local government officials as well as the common people of the area are just not satisfied and consider these efforts to be inefficient to the needs of the people.

## **Critical Constraints**

Given the rough terrain of the Gilgit and the fact that it is situated quite far from the other areas where from the help can be extended to the flood affected population, the relief activities need to be started quite well ahead before the disaster takes place, as, once the lake breaks down and the water pours out of its banks, the only way to reach the flood affected people would be through airport which does not seem having enough capacity to allow for more than two to three landings of small size planes at a time. The air port is too small to be used for landing the large sized planes which are usually used in relief activities.

## **Conclusion**

People in Hunza valley were already deprived of basic human necessities and were living ordinary lives which have been changed overnight by the Glory of Mother Nature. Currently, horrifying situation is being faced by the people and due to the geographic location of the target area emergency relief operation would be equally challenging keeping an eye on the current economic situation of Pakistan as well. Thousands of lives face critical challenges to survive this ordeal and need a great humanitarian response not only to safe lives but a civilization itself.