



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP extends support to main Aceh hospital

Banda Aceh, 28 February, 2005 – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is expanding its programme of support to Banda Aceh's Abidin General Hospital to cover restoration of key water and waste disposal facilities.

For the last month, a team of 400 workers employed under UNDP's Cash for Work programme, have been clearing out the hospital building, which was left a meter deep in mud and debris by the tsunami.

Now workers will take on the task of emptying the hospital's damaged septic tanks of tsunami mud, lowering the soil levels to improve drainage and clearing out the sewage system.

The decision to extend the programme to cover the critical question of water supply and disposal was announced by UN Assistant Secretary General Dr Hafiz Pasha, on a visit to Aceh last week.

Mr. Pasha, who is also Director of UNDP's Asia Pacific bureau, viewed the work already done by UNDP teams and was told of the urgent need for an efficient clean water system.

According to Australian engineers currently working on the site, the existing facilities are inherently inadequate and have been further disabled by extensive tsunami damage. Without clean water, the chances of an outbreak of diseases such as cholera, dengue and malaria within the hospital itself are, they say, greatly increased.

"Restoring a good water supply and sewage system could potentially save more lives than a doctor and an operating table," Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Cummings, CO of the Australian Engineer Group, told Hafiz Pasha.

During his visit, Mr Pasha told UNDP workers there that he was impressed with what he had seen. "This hospital has become an international symbol both of Aceh's suffering and its recovery," he said. "It is also an excellent example of how different agencies, including UNDP, NGOs and international military representatives, can work together to produce fast and effective results."

"We are delighted to offer this additional support to this key facility," said UNDP's Resident Representative in Indonesia, Bo Asplund, who accompanied Pasha. "Having provided the labour to clear the hospital, we are happy to continue helping in any way we can."

Heinrich Haupt, Special Envoy of the German Foreign office in Aceh, who accompanied Pasha at the hospital met with the German military representatives already working on site and pledged the continuing support of the German government. He said German teams were now conducting a survey to determine the most pressing need of the hospital. "The German government is determined to work with the hospital on a long term basis," he added.

During his visit to Aceh, Hafiz Pasha visited a number of UNDP projects and met with key officials to discuss how the emergency relief effort can be translated into a programme for long-term development.

"It is vital now that we look at issues of long term stability, helping people to go back to their livelihoods and homes," he said. "While here I have been impressed by the resilience and determination of the Acehnese people. UNDP will continue to do all it can to support their efforts and those of the Indonesian government to recover from this disaster."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Workers in UNDP's Cash for Work programme have so far cleared the hospital, the military airport and the Islamic university. They are paid 30,000 RP (approx. 3USD per day) under contracts that last on average 3-6 months. The programme is in the process of expanding to employ 30,000 workers across the province.

Dr. Hafiz A. Pasha is a UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. His expertise includes globalisation, trade and debt. He visited Aceh as part of an Asia-wide tour of all tsunami affected countries in the region.

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