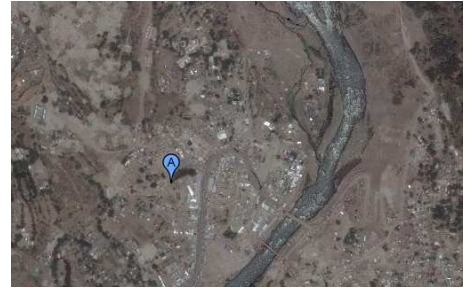


The Kashmir Earthquake

The 2005 Kashmir Earthquake Was a major earthquake centred in Kashmir Pakistan. It took place on the 8th of October at 8.53 am. The earthquakes epicentre was Balakot. Measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale with around 20 aftershocks, the earthquake had devastating consequences, with a death toll of 74,698 and around 106,000 casualties.



The map shows that the Earthquakes epicentre was Balakot. As a result the areas that were worst affected were those in Pakistan Kashmir, that surrounded Balakot, for example 11000 people died in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan Kashmir.

The Earthquake was caused as Kashmir lies in the area of collision between the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates.

Pressure built up between the plates for hundreds and thousands of years until the plates jolted apart. The earthquake took place only 6 miles under ground so it didn't loose much energy, this is one of the reasons that the earthquake had such a devastating affect on the people and environment of Kashmir. The Indian Tectonic plate still continues to moves North at about 5cm per year. This diagram shows the direction of the Eurasian and Asian plate movement. As you can see the Indian plate is subducting under the Asian plate. The Kashmir Earthquake is also associated with this.

The Kashmir Earthquake had many devastating effects on both the People and the Environment of the affected

areas. Thousands of people were killed simply by being crushed as buildings collapsed on top of them. An entire Generation of young people was wiped out in a matter of seconds as many of them had just started lessons

when the earthquake struck. The roads and rail system were also directly affected, especially bridges and elevated roads, many roads were cut off blocking crucial supply routs that lead to the smaller, more remote areas. The railway was severely affected due to turns in the railway track alignment. In addition the piped sewage system was seriously damaged contaminating the water system and open wells were blocked by debris.



There were also many indirect affects of the Kashmir earthquake. Firstly Blocked roads cut off rescue and aid workers from remote areas leaving hundreds more people to die in trapped buildings and those severely injured receiving no

Thousands of people left bewildered and hopeless



Woman prepares to leave her ruined home

medical care. Heavy monsoon rains and land slides proposed a threat to those in mountainous areas blocking road access causing around 40, 000 people to leave there homes. 3 million people were left homeless as a result of the earthquake. Damaged water systems left lack of clean drinking water and food distribution and marketing systems were badly disrupted leaving people starving. Hundreds of rotting bodies were left in the streets causing high risk of disease

Whilst people in Muzaffarabad , Islamabad and Other large towns received aid and medical help fairly quickly many people in smaller villages such as Ghanjer went days before medical help, aid or rescue teams arrived.



Muzaffrabad three days in, aid has arrived



Ghanjer three days in, locals search for survivors still no aid

Many countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations offered relief aid in the international response to the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. The aid given was relief supplies including food, medical supplies, tents and blankets, many countries also donated money. Rescue and relief workers were sent from different parts of the world to the affected areas and they brought along rescue equipment, such as helicopters and rescue dogs which were used to find live casualties and recover dead bodies. Casualties were taken to be cared for at the Army and Civil hospitals around Pakistan. Makeshift hospitals were set up and doctors were flown in to take care of the many injured people. Tents with kitchen areas were given to provide food and shelter, as well as truck loads of blankets and medicine. In the smaller villages locals worked hard



to find live casualties but many of them had no aid or help from rescue teams. Throughout the earthquake Islamabad airport remained open flying charitable workers in to the country and those affected by the earthquake out.

The Government of Pakistan opened The President's Relief Fund for the Earthquake relief operation, and also appealed to other countries for Aid. They appealed for blankets, tents, medicine, warm clothes, food and many other supplies. Pakistan International Airlines gave free delivery for goods from anywhere in the world to Pakistan. The Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz asked authorities to "utilize all available resources, including machinery, to help the victims". He said "the entire federal administration, civil and military authorities had been alerted, and relief goods had been provided to them for the victims of the quake". However the government were still accused of responding too slowly and doing little to ensure that aid reached the smaller villages.



Pakistani soldiers carry tents away from a US helicopter

People who lived in the larger towns and cities that received aid quickly may have believed that the government were doing a good job in providing earthquake relief. However for those in the smaller mountainous villages who received little aid or rescue help may have

believed that the government were not doing much to help the victims of the quake.

The main reason that the Kashmir earthquake claimed so many lives was that the quake occurred at around 9 o'clock. Saturday is a normal school day in Pakistan Kashmir, most students were at schools when the earthquake struck. Poor construction of buildings meant many were buried under collapsed schools. People were also trapped in their homes. As it was the month of Ramadan, many people were taking a nap after their breakfast and did not have time to escape during the earthquake. Another reason is that in remote areas aid and rescue workers were slow to arrive, leaving more people to die of suffocation, starvation and injury. The Earthquake cut off roads stopping people from reaching hospitals, there were not enough helicopters to transport the injured to the makeshift hospitals and once there, there were not enough doctors to care for all of the casualties.

There are many strategies that the Government can put in place to prevent such a high death toll during the next Earthquake. Firstly the government need to devise a plan to make sure they can act quicker and provide aid to the smaller more remote villages should there be another earthquake. They should also work on better building construction and use lighter materials which would cause less people to die from being crushed or trapped by fallen buildings. Also schools should begin earthquake drills so that if an earthquake does take place during school hours pupils know what to do.

To conclude it can be seen that not only were the areas in Pakistan Kashmir affected by devastating consequences such as homelessness and starvation but also faced longer term indirect effects. Such as people living with diseases which they caught from contaminated water or rotting bodies, many of the survivors still living in tents for years after the earthquake and people having to leave their villages and not returning.

By Bethan Luffman



