

Messianic Ministry Aids Pakistan Flood Victims

A Messianic Jewish organization based in Jerusalem is organizing relief efforts for Pakistan, which has been facing the worst flooding in 80 years.

Next month, the missions ministry Keren HaShlichut will go into Pakistan and help distribute food and supplies for victims of massive flooding that the United Nations estimates has affected nearly 14 million people.

Although Pakistan is largely a Muslim country and considered by some to be an enemy of Israel, Keren HaShlichut director Gavriel Gefen said his organization is committed to showing Christ's love by serving those in other nations.

"I've endeavored to bring the believing community in Israel to a place of seeking to bless and to serve the nations rather than only always seeking those in the nations that would bless and serve us," he said.

Gefen has ministered among 500 tribal groups in 80 countries and says Muslim communities have received Messianic missionaries warmly. Many have been open to hearing the gospel.

"One of the unique things that a Jewish believer in Jesus can say to a Muslim is that we were both wrong about who Jesus was or is; He's much more than a prophet," Gefen said.

"For them to hear that from a Jewish Israeli is something that very often stops them in their tracks and causes them to even more deeply consider what you've said," he added, "because it's coming from somebody who's perceived to have been an enemy and whose people, as much as they have, have always rejected Jesus."

Since July 29, Pakistan has been facing one of the worst natural disasters in its history. More than 1,600 Pakistanis have died and 5 million have been displaced as monsoon flooding has wiped out villages, infrastructure and farmland.

The U.S. is providing up to \$150 million in aid and has already delivered hundreds of tons of relief supplies, including 700,000 mosquito nets, water treatment machines, blankets and inflatable boats for those in isolated villages, the Associated Press reported.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said the floods have damaged more than 200 health facilities, complicating efforts to prevent outbreaks of deadly waterborne disease. Officials estimated that millions of people are at risk of contracting such illnesses as cholera and dysentery while expressing concern this week about the potential for more flooding.

World Vision reports that there are already signs of disease outbreaks. It reported that contaminated water, cramped living conditions and a lack of sanitation are fueling a rapid increase in cases of diarrhea and skin diseases among children.

"In conditions like these, something as simple as a cough can turn into a deadly case of pneumonia; a lack of clean water is likely to result in diarrhea for a small child," said Mike Bailey, World Vision's regional manager for advocacy.

"The fact is that many of these families may not be able to return home for at least three months, if not longer," he added. "Lack of adequate shelter, combined with an extreme shortage of health care and medicine, is making this disaster that much worse."

World Vision has treated more than 4,100 people in the three emergency health clinics it operates in Lower Dir. The Christian humanitarian ministry also has provided food,

emergency supplies and health care to more than 30,000 people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and plans to aid 300,000 people across Pakistan in the next three to six months.

Operation Blessing International (OBI) has teamed with the German humanitarian organization humedica to establish a medical clinic that treats roughly 125 patients daily in the Peshawar-Charsadda region of northwest Pakistan. OBI, founded by Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson, is also distributing medical relief supplies to the flood zone and operating a mobile medical clinic that travels to different villages each day.

Convoy of Hope is partnering with groups on the ground in Pakistan to purchase emergency supplies and is sending a relief team to the area. Baltimore-based World Relief also is teaming with Christian organizations in Pakistan to assist 8,000 families with food and supplies such as tents, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, gas cooking stoves and hygiene kits.

Open Doors USA, which advocates for the persecuted church, is requesting donations for emergency packs that partner organizations will distribute among Pakistani Christians, who the organization says are being denied aid because of their faith. Pakistan is ranked No. 14 on the ministry's World Watch List, which lists the 50 nations that are the worst persecutors of Christians.

Open Doors said refuge is often set up in mosques, where extremist strongholds are strongest and Christians are most vulnerable. The emergency packs will provide a family of six with essential items, including food, medicine, pillows, blankets and cooking utensils.