

# The Main Features of Rustaq District, and some of the Earthquake Damaged Villages

## Task Force Report No.2



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# **Earthquake Disaster in Rustaq District of Takhar Province**

## **A Report on The Main Feature of The District and The Damaged Villages**

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### **A- A brief over view on Rustaq district**

Rustaq is the second largest district of Takhar province of Afghanistan. It was hit by a heavy earthquake (6.1 Richter) on the evening of Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 1998.

The district is located to the North-East side of the province, surrounded by Yangi Qala and Chayab district from the North, Kalafgan and Taloqan from the South and Khawaja Ghar the West: To the east it is bounded to Rogh and Shar-e-Buzurg of Badaghshan.

The population is estimated about 400,000 adjusted according to 1994 population figure. The people are mostly Tajik and Uzbek with some Buluch, Pushtun and Hazarah. The district center of Rustaq is a predominant social feature of Rustaq population.

Farming and livestock raising are the main foundation of economic life of the people. Irrigated agriculture covers only about 25,000 jeribs (5-10%) of total agriculture land area, while dry land farming area is estimated 345,000 jeribs (90-95%) of cultivable land of the district.

With soft clay loam and sandy loam soils, vast areas of mountain valleys and steep foothills are providing the best dry-land farming conditions in the North-East of Afghanistan. The main crops grown as rainfed are:

- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1- Dry land wheat.      | 4- Vitch dry land   |
| 2- Dry land check peas. | 5- Linseed dry land |
| 3- Sesimi dry land      | 6- etc.             |

Vegetables such as potatoes and farm products such as melon and watermelons are having good dry land growth potential in this district and farmers are traditionally practicing the growth / production of these crops.

Rivers, spring and seasonal flood water provide limited irrigated farming conditions in this district. Beside some very limited irrigated wheat crops, some land areas are also planted vegetable (onions leeks, turnips, potatoes, tomatoes and sweet potatoes etc). The main fruits produced in Rustaq are apples, pears, grapes, almonds, walnuts, apricots, cherries and mulberries. Melons and watermelons some time produced in surplus amount are exported to neighboring districts and province of Rustaq.

For riding and transportation, donkeys and horses are the main beast of burdens. As a main transportation mean they are the main power to link the villages to each other and the local bazaars which are the buying and selling places for ther the rural population.

Common local skills are mainly making farm tools (shovel, plowheads, cycles, hoes, pitchforks, axes...etc.) making of pressure cookers from the cast-iron is a metal work skill in the district center. Horseshoes making and carpentry work are part of the main skills in this district. Beside the skill of metal works, goldsmith work and making jewelry and machinery repair activities are good income earning opportunities in Rustaq.

Leather processing and leather works particularly the locally made shoes which are called Chamoose are the most attractive handicraft in Rustaq. For women some embroidery works (making of embroidered caps, sewing of men chapans (over coat-like wearings) and weaving of kelems and Jowals (Large bags for storing grain) are the typical skill in this district.

Bazaar days are held twice a week (Monday, Thursday) in Rustaq district center. People were seen in large participation for buying and bringing commodities and livestock for selling from far-located villages.

Education in Rustaq has suffered damages and retardation both through devastation of wars and destruction by earthquake. As a quick glance, based on the reflections from local authorities the status of schools are briefed as follows:

Total number of primary, religious and high schools were reported to be 31, from these schools 22 are primary schools in villages which are mostly destroyed through the years of war ort by the February disaster of earthquake. Some of them are functioning through the support and up holding from the outside. One boy's high school and one girl's high school, three girl's primary school and two boy's secondary school are functioning. Six schools are following their education without a building. SCA has repair six schools in this district. The educational authorities do not regularly provide the teacher's salaries. Drinking water is a problem not only in the schools but also in all of Rustaq district.

#### **B- A global reflection by the Emergency Assistance Office**

In the first visit with Mr. Sobhan Qull the responsible of the Rustaq earthquake emergency office, the task force learned that totally 24 villages mostly located at the East, South East and North East direction far from Rustaq City are affected by the earthquake (See the map) from these villages:

- 9 villages are completely (100%) destroyed / damaged
- 5 villages are (80%) destroyed
- 10 villages are (40%) destroyed

The UN emergency operations provided food and non-food items in small quantities, tents about (2,300) and some clothing and foot wearing. The need for foot wearings particularly

for female, lamps and candles are not available. Agricultural inputs particularly seeds and farms power and equipment are urgently required. About 2-3 weeks time is left for spring wheat planting.

The people who are wounded or burned are in need of health services and treatments. Some information on the need for wheat, potatoes and chickpeas seeds were given. Alternatives for provision and distribution of seeds, and other agriculture needs were discussed with Mr. Sobhan Qull an internal source in damaged villages were recommended to be used as a quick choice. Community representatives through consultations and advises by this emergency office can always provide facilitation to reach and distribute assistance items to the people.

The high priority villages recommend for assistance were:

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1- Sur-i-Ghar      | 9- Zhanibala     |
| 2- Kezer           | 10- Zhani paieen |
| 3- Ganj            | 11- Toot         |
| 4- Khawaja Khairab | 12- Lungur       |
| 5- Jarail          | 13- Gourgan      |
| 6- Ganda           | 14- Hazar smock  |
| 7- Bekha           | 15- Quduge       |
| 8- Dushtak         |                  |

### **C- A Glance on the destruction:**

As a sample of the earthquake destruction a quick glance is made over the following eight villages.

#### **1. Ganj village:**

- A large village estimated 640 families
- East central location to Rustaq city (see map)
- About one hour drive on a bad path from Rustaq, on rainy days almost impossible or very difficult to travel by vehicles.
- Surrounded by mountains from North and East.
- A heavily destroyed village, from 900-1000 people are killed by the earthquake.
- Orphans and widows left about 100 persons.
- UN has distributed 298 tents and some other needs.
- Livestock killed, about 300 heads.
- About 50 oxen have remained from the earthquake.
- Irrigated farming is limited (300 jeribs) springs are the main irrigation sources.
- Main fruits are mulberry, apricots cherry, apples, almonds.
- Wheat, chick peas, potatoes, oilcrops are commonly grown.
- Plant, pests and diseases are a bad problem.
- The school has been destroyed and 3 teachers are killed during the earthquake.
- No clinic in the village.

- A small village bazaar, which used to exist, is almost completely destroyed.
- Women skills (weaving) are very limited.
- The sequences of earthquake is still on going and the people are under the tents.

## 2. Kezer village:

- Estimated population 306 families.
- East Central direction to the Rustaq city located in higher attitude about one hour drive by vehicle from Rustaq (see map)
- Surround by close high rocky mountain from the East and North, and rain fed agriculture hillside lands to the south (see map).
- Heavy destruction of houses, people are living under the tent.
- UN has distributed 286 tents which are plastic and mostly torn by winds, people were complaining that only 200 tents are given and more tents were required.
- About 100 heads of oxen has remained saved from the earthquake disaster.
- No school, a village school used to serve the village which is not existing now.
- No health assistanc and clinical facilities.
- Mixed orchards, apples, almond, and plum with poplar tree grown, pests and insects were a main problem of the farmers.
- Rainfed wheat, chick peas and oil crops are grown. Each seer of wheat seed produces 10 seers of out puts.
- Limited skills (masons, carpenters and extraction of oils from oilseeds) are existing in the village.
- People are very depressed and in grief. They are expecting to be removed from their present village to some where which is safe.
- Landslide views are seen in the surrounding areas of the village.

## 3. Jarail village:

- Located at the East Side of a very high rocky mountain
- A large village, 370 families.
- Through UN, 298 tents have been distributed in this village.
- About one hour drive to the direction of East of South Rustaq city (see map).
- 58 persons had lost their life during the earthquake.
- 75% destruction of the houses were reported by the villagers report.
- However in spite of many villagers seen under the tents, the destruction seems lesser than the 75% scale.
- From about 150 heads of oxen, about 100 is lost.
- About 200, orphans widows and elders have remained from the earthquake, presently living with relatives.
- The earthquake has remained as a repeating process in slower degree than the main one (6.1 Richter) on the Feb.4, 1998.
- Drinking water from the spring is less problem in this village.
- Previously there was a primary school, now it has been destroyed.
- Three main mosques in the village, religious subjects are taught to the children.

- Fall planting of crops was finished. Spring planting has remained incomplete (unplanted).
- Pests and diseases were reported as the main horticultural problem.
- There were some remarks that if earthquake remains ongoing they want to change from this village however this inclination was not strong.
- Dry land wheat areas (planted, unplanted) were visible in the surrounding of the village.

4. **Khawaja Khariab village:**

- Located at the eastern slope of a high mountain.
- Roughly about 1.5 hours drive from Rustaq city to this village located to the South-East direction from Rustaq city (see map).
- Travel by foot from this village to Rustaq city takes about 5 hours, plus a 5 hours return trip
- Population about 400-500 families, UN has distributed 350 tents to the people of this village with some other needs.
- The houses on the middle of the narrow valley and those, which are on the mountain slope, are heavily destroyed.
- Oxen are lost, only about 50 heads are left which is not enough for the land cultivation in this village.
- Water supply for the village house has been from spring and it is completely destroyed and blocked by a large land slide.
- The demolished primary school building was visible on a flat foothill/mountain side.
- The small village shopping area is still to an extent open and is offering some of the needs of the families.
- A promise from government authorities has been given to replace them from this village to another location.
- There is no flour mill in the village.
- A bridge connecting the village to outside was destroyed and it was reported as a need to this village.

5. **Ganda Chashma village:**

- A small village, 219 families, UN has distributed 66 tents plus some other needs in this village.
- Located to the South-East direction of Rustaq City, it takes about 2 hours drive from Rustaq on a bad road to reach to that village.
- 75 individuals have lost their life in the earthquake.
- 160 Oxen have been lost and 65 heads are left as the main farm power source.
- Agriculture is predominantly rain fed (dry land farming).
- Water supply for drinking was from a spring 2 km from the village. Water was led through a pipe to the village center, which is completely demolished by the



earthquake. Presently they are using another spring which is 5 km from the village.

- One primary school exist which has many problem's teachers, materials, salaries etc.
- No clinic, a lot of health and treatment problems, it takes about 8-10 hours of travel by foot to reach to Rustaq city for health needs.
- 70% of land are under fall planted rain fed crops, 30% were under ongoing spring planting process.
- Presently due earthquake, there were 100 widows orphans and elder without dependents.
- Due to shortage of agriculture land, pastures for livestock and water shortage people feel that some of the families may move to another area.
- Insects and plant diseases are a problem in this village.

#### 6. **Baghihisar village:**

- Located to the North-East direction of Rustaq City about one hour drive on a very bad driving path condition.
- A large village with 700 families, UN has distributed 257 tents and some other needs in this village. The village has four mosques.
- 40 individuals have lost their life in the earthquake.
- The earthquake has destroyed 60% of houses.
- The main sources of irrigation are river (for about 2000 jeribs of land) the earthquake has heavily destroyed the canal and the diversion (intake). Flood has damaged the diversion.
- Wheat, linseed and potatoes (irrigated) are grown pears, apricots, cherries, and Tashpati and grapes are the main fruits, onion, turnips, tomatoes and sugar beets are the known vegetable produced.
- Pests and diseases damages are the main complain related to horticulture in this village.
- Drinking water is from streams and is unclean / unhealthy.
- Weaving skills and tailoring by female, and carpentry and blacksmith works by men are the existing skill in this village.
- The earthquake has destroyed the school named (Khawaja Zahir-ud-Din).
- No clinic or doctor in the village.
- 15,000 sheep and goats are owned by the families in this village, livestock diseases exist and it is a problem.
- They used to have surplus products for sale, now due to limited water and other factors they are below this status.
- The skilled labor wage rate was estimated about Afs.300, 000/day.

7. **Surighar village:**

- Located to the North-East direction of Rustaq City about one hour's drive on a bad road condition.
- A large village with a population of 540 families.
- 800 individuals have lost their life in the earthquake.
- The village is totally (100%) destroyed; five mosques are all demolished.
- UN has distributed 320 tents and 525 plastic sheets beside some other materials.
- From 470 needs of oxen only 20 is left the rest is destroyed by the earthquake.
- Only 120-130 sheep are left from the earthquake.
- The irrigation source is from river and it is very limited to vegetable and some of the forage and crops. Related to water distribution, the people of this village and the people of Bagh-I-hisar have some dispute and disagreement.
- Spring is the main source of drinking water, and it has been affected / damaged by the earthquake.
- Vegetable such as onion, potatoes, tomatoes, turnips and sugar beets are grown beside consumption some surplus amount is sold.
- Some shrubs and bushes are sold for fuel.
- Insects and pests are damaging the factors to the limited horticulture activities of this village.
- Skills of female are tailoring weaving of Kilims and Juwals (sacks for grains).
- Make skills are masonry, carpentry and blacksmith works.
- 44 Orphans are left with some widows and elders with no dependents.
- The earthquake has destroyed the school shared by this village and Baghihisar (Khawaja Zahir-ud-Din School).
- Villagers owns no transportation facilities (truck, larries).
- No clinic and health facilities exist in the village.

8. **Bekha village:**

- Located to North-East of Rustaq, about 1.5 hour's drive from city. The stonepiled river bed / flood way, is the main part of the road to reach to that village (see the map).
- This village as reported by the villagers has a population of 200 families.
- UN has provided 145 tents to the people of this village, including a package of food and non-food items.
- The destruction of the earthquake is about 70% of the houses.
- 13 individuals have lost their life during the earthquake.
- 30 oxen are lost during the earthquake.
- About 100 jeribs of irrigated land exist in the whole village, which is irrigated from the river.
- People indicated the need of over-passes to be constructed along some of the irrigation ditches for transference of water to the fields (plots).
- The intake of the village canal is often washed by the flood and rebuilt by the people.

- Drinking water supply is from the rivers. In the flood times it stays muddy and unclean for drinking.
- The village has two mosques where children are learning religious subjects. There has been no school in the village.
- Wheat (rain fed) linseed, chick peas, potatoes & vetch are grown in this village. Some are sold for cash needs.
- From the vegetable onion, turnips, tomatoes and cucumber are grown. Some are sold for cash needs of the families.
- There is no medical / clinic service or source. Sick people are taken / transferred by donkeys or horses to Rustaq city.
- There are some animal husbandry mixed with farming but its products are limited for home consumption mainly.
- Some tailoring works and kelem weaving skills are common in the village mainly by women.
- The number of orphans were estimated 10 and of widows, 56 persons.
- There was some inclination shown to transfer their houses to a safer place.

#### **D – Some Common Features of the Damaged Villages**

Wheat seed distribution program was implemented during 1/4/98 – 15/4/98. The planting season was ongoing in the target villages during this period, even planting time was indicated to stretch up to 20 – 25 of April in higher altitudes. For chick peas and potatoes seeds distribution a quick survey in the target villages was planned. In all of the villages planting season for these crops was up to the end of May. Horticulture particularly orchards were limited and in mixed forms. Farmers in all villages were complaining about damages insects pests and diseases. Shortage of farm power (Oxen) was a focal point almost in all of the villages. A program was planned with this regard. There was no reporting of the existing of nurseries in any of the villages. The price of one fruit tree sapling was reported up to Afs.4,000/..

The seed rates were reported 25 – 30 seers /jerib for potatoes, 4-5 seers for wheat and up to 3 seers for chick peas.

The roads (driving paths) to travel to the villages were extremely bad and very tiring by vehicles.

In all of the 15 villages no report of private vehicle ownership to be used for any kind of transportation was given, donkeys and some horses were mainly used for transportation and riding.

With few exception, villages shops / bazaars are destroyed or are not functioning. Mostly people are trying to reach in the 'Bazaar days' held twice a week in the central city of Rustaq.

Health service and drinking water were common points of complain reported by villagers.

Assistance contacts by UN and many of the organizations have reached to their complete end or to their lowest level. Villagers and the local authorities with limited possibilities are left alone in the present difficult unknown situation, of Rustaq earthquake victimized villages.

**E. The Main Problem, The Los of Livelihood Security:**

Through the meetings with the villages in the damaged / destroyed villages, they expressed their broad understandings related to the present situation and the expected consequences. Their vision is illustrated in the form of a problem tree. See the illustration attached.

