

SURVIVING THE PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE:
PERCEPTIONS OF THE AFFECTED ONE YEAR LATER

Fritz
Institute

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This report was prepared by Desiree Bliss and Lynnette Larsen for Fritz Institute. The research was conducted by TNS India and TNS Pakistan under the supervision of Dr. Vimala Ramalingam. Fritz Institute would like to thank Dr. Daniel Pallin of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative for his work on the survey instrument.

INTRODUCTION

At 8:50 a.m. on October 8, 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck northern Pakistan causing serious damage in the North West Frontier (NWFP) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) provinces. Over 4000 villages were affected, 73,000 people killed, 79,000 injured and 3.3 million people rendered homeless. Over 470,000 houses were completely destroyed, nearly 65% of the hospitals in the area were destroyed or badly damaged and an estimated 10,000 school buildings were affected. As in many emergencies, the most vulnerable segment of the population was among the hardest hit: the elderly, women whose husbands were killed or disabled, and an estimated 1.6-2.2 million children. Compounding the destruction of the initial earthquake were a series of strong aftershocks that continued for weeks. In addition to the estimated \$5 billion in property damage, there was significant loss of livelihoods through destruction of arable land, crops and livestock, businesses, and jobs. Despite the resilience of the population, the impact of the disaster was overwhelming and devastating. The timing and geography of the earthquake – which occurred at the onset of the harsh winter and in remote, mountainous terrain – caused serious concern about the vulnerability of the affected populations and their ability to survive.

The local, regional and international aid communities mobilized immediately, and supplies began to pour into the region. As in previous disasters of this scale, the relief effort was fragmented, with many different players providing a myriad of services. The Government of Pakistan established the Federal Relief Commission (FRC) and the Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) to serve as a liaison between the government, international and national organizations involved in relief and rehabilitation. Relief and recovery committees were formulated as focal points at the district level.

One year later, it is still not clear whether the Pakistan relief effort was considered a success, whether there was adequate relief to meet the needs of the affected populations, and what some of the remaining issues continue to be. In order to understand these dynamics, Fritz Institute conducted a survey of affected households to assess their perceptions of the damage, loss, and humanitarian assistance provided. The research builds on similar surveys Fritz Institute conducted after the South Asia Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina.¹ It is hoped that this ongoing research of beneficiary perceptions provides insight to donors, policy makers, governments and humanitarian agencies about the factors that influence the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian assistance.

¹To date, Fritz Institute has conducted in-person interviews with over 6,000 relief recipients across aid agencies, disasters, countries and time, in order to develop an evidence base of what works and what does not across the sector.

METHODOLOGY

This report outlines the results of a survey of 621 Pakistani households in the five most-affected districts of the North West Frontier Province (Abbottabad, Batagram, Kohistan, Mansehra, and Shangla), conducted in August 2006, ten months after the earthquake.² The earthquake-affected households were asked to record damage or loss by responding to questions of resource sufficiency before the earthquake, and almost one year later. They were also asked to recall the principal providers of relief goods and services two months after the earthquake and at the time the study was implemented (ten months after the earthquake). Finally, they were asked to provide their perceptions of the adequacy, timeliness, quality and distribution process of aid that they received, and their satisfaction with the same.

The locations were selected to represent geographical diversity of the affected region. Of the eight most-affected districts, the five covered in this survey comprise approximately 67% of the estimated population affected. Of the total 621 households, 32% were from areas located at very high altitudes, 45% from villages located at high altitudes, and the rest from villages located on the plains or at ground level.

About 53% of the respondents surveyed were over 40 years of age. The literacy level among the respondents surveyed was low with only 50% reporting that they could read and write. About 46% of the affected respondents surveyed were illiterate. Among the literate heads of households, over 50% of the respondents surveyed had completed up to ten years of school education. The main occupations across households in the sample were non-farm laborers, farm laborers, and government employees (see Table 1).

Given the traditional Pashtun culture, interviews were only possible with male heads of households, and all the interviewers were also male. The structured interviews, designed to elicit satisfaction levels and perceptions, were conducted in the local language by interviewers from the region. For the most part, standard five-point scales were used to gauge respondent feedback. The interviewers – professional social science researchers – were trained in the interview protocol in Peshawar, Pakistan in the first week of August 2006. They were taken through the research instrument, participated in mock interviews and received feedback before being deployed in the field. In total, three teams of four researchers each conducted all the interviews.

²The research team was unable to obtain permission to enter Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), the other most-affected province, due to the ongoing conflict and political sensitivities.

KEY FINDINGS

1. One Year After the Earthquake, 60% of the People Affected by the Earthquake Remain Displaced, Unable to Return to Their Homes. People Have Become Much Poorer with 63% of Households Suffering from Income Disruption.

For the population in the affected areas, the earthquake had a profound impact on every aspect of life. Before the earthquake, 69% were living in semi-permanent structures (homes made from earth and stones) and 30% were in permanent structures (houses made from brick, cement and wood). After the earthquake, approximately 60% of affected households were displaced and, a year later, are still not living in their homes. In fact, two-thirds of those displaced reported that they were living in tents or public buildings in their villages. The districts of Batagram and Kohistan were the most shelter-affected with 82% and 65% of households displaced, respectively. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents overall said that they did not have winterized shelter last winter. Looking ahead to the coming winter, vulnerability remains high in light of the fact that over three-quarters of those still living in tents are at high altitudes.

A stunning 63% of those surveyed reported having their income disrupted because of damage to facilities or land. An additional 10% reported hardship due to the impairment of markets. The drop in income is particularly evident at the lowest income levels. Prior to the disaster, 6% of households brought in an income of below 1500 Pakistan rupees per month (approximately \$25 US), while in the wake of the disaster, five-times the number of households reported such an income (see Table 2). Before the earthquake, 97% of those surveyed said that they had adequate income, with 33% reporting just enough income to survive, 45% all they needed to survive, and 19% more than they needed (see Table 3). Ten months after the earthquake, only 69% reported income sufficiency with 1% having more income than they needed, 25% all they needed to survive, and 43% just enough income to survive.

The earthquake's impact on lives and livelihoods appears to have been more severe on the most rural, agricultural and remote areas of NWFP. The three professions that were most affected by the disaster, in terms of income, included farm laborers, non-farm laborers and farmers.³ Households in Batagram, where over half of those surveyed were working in agriculture before the disaster, reported the lowest levels of access to food, water, shelter, and income. The district also displayed the highest number (82%) of households continuing to live outside their homes ten months after the earthquake. A significant number of households had shifted to living on earthquake-related compensation benefits and unemployment had risen from 1% to 9%. Of those reporting being unemployed or living on compensation, the majority had previously been farm and non-farm laborers.

2. Humanitarian Assistance Provided was Inadequate Relative to Need. Ten Months Later, Large Numbers of the Earthquake-Affected Report Having Acute Needs for Basic Assistance.

To understand the immediate and ongoing impact of the earthquake on households in the affected area, survey respondents were asked to what extent they needed aid two months after the earthquake

³Those cultivating their own land.

and at the present time. Two months after the earthquake, an overwhelming majority (more than 75%) reported a "great" or "very great" need for assistance in all sectors (see Table 4). For example, 96% of respondents reported needing assistance with shelter to a great extent or higher, and 93% needed the same levels of assistance for the restoration of livelihood. "Our village is on the top of the mountains. Our main need is drinking water as the earthquake destroyed the sewer system and water pipes," observed a villager from Karodha in the Abbottabad district.

Despite the widely expressed needs, large proportions of affected households reported not receiving any assistance in key sectors almost a year after the earthquake (see Table 5). According to one Mansehra survey participant, "whatever relief was provided, it was totally insufficient." Fifty percent (50%) or more of the respondents in need of livelihood restoration, drinking water, sanitation, clothing and relocation at the two-month mark had not received services; at the ten-month mark, even larger percentages of those households in need of the same services reported receiving none. The percentage of those who needed but did not receive food almost doubled over the same period. For example, in Shangla two months after the earthquake, 88% of households surveyed reported receiving no assistance in obtaining drinking water, while ten months later those without drinking water remained very high at 89%. "We are facing the problem of getting clean drinking water, as the natural resources are all destroyed by the earthquake," said a Shangla villager.

3. The Pakistani Government, International NGOs (INGOs) and Individuals Played the Major Role in Both the Relief and Rehabilitation Efforts. National and Local NGOs had a Relatively Small and Seemingly Subdued Presence in the Relief and Rehabilitation Efforts.

When asked to identify the principal source of aid two months after the earthquake, most aid recipients identified the Government of Pakistan (including the military) as the primary aid provider of food, shelter, livelihood, and medical services (See Table 6).⁴ "If it were not for the Army we would not have made it up to now," stated one Batagram villager. Individuals were remembered as principal providers of drinking water and clothing as well as relocation and counseling services. Toilet and sanitation services were identified by the majority as having been provided by INGOs.

Ten months after the earthquake, households cited the government as the principal provider in only three sectors: shelter, livelihood and relocation services. However, in shelter and livelihood assistance, the proportion of respondents identifying the role of the government had dropped. For example, the government, which was identified as providing 42% of the shelter at the two-month mark, was only recognized as the main provider of shelter 32% of the time at the ten-month mark. INGOs were now identified by the majority of households as the principal provider of food, toilet and sanitation, and medical services, and their role in all other categories of assistance had increased. For example, the role of INGOs in the provision of shelter increased from 24% to 30%. Individuals continued to be seen as the main providers of drinking water, clothing, and counseling.

While the government, INGOs and private individuals were most often cited as the principal

⁴Because survey respondents were asked to name only the principal provider of assistance, results do not preclude the existence of other providers in the service area.

providers of assistance, the non-exclusive nature of the survey question does not suggest that local or national NGOs were not present in the region. However, their limited visibility is notable.

4. Levels of Satisfaction were Generally High Among Those Who Received Aid. Aid Recipients were Most Satisfied with the Aid Provided by the Pakistani Government and International NGOs, Respectively.

One of the astounding findings of this survey is the large numbers of people who report not receiving assistance after the devastating earthquake. Since satisfaction with specific forms of aid was only measured among those who received assistance, these numbers should be interpreted with caution and balanced against the met and unmet needs reported earlier. However, the fact that satisfaction levels were generally high and stayed high among those who received assistance is a positive message from the survey (see Table 7).

Overall, survey respondents expressed the highest satisfaction levels with the aid provided by the Government of Pakistan, citing the government as the most outstanding aid provider ten months after the earthquake. The role of the government and its effectiveness was particularly notable in Abbottabad and Shangla where 75% and 63% of respondents, respectively, recognized the government as the most outstanding aid provider. After government assistance, survey respondents were most satisfied with international NGOs, with the World Food Programme, Action Aid, HOPE and UNICEF being cited as outstanding aid providers. Aid recipients were least satisfied with the aid provided by national and local NGOs. However, when asked to identify outstanding national organizations, the Red Crescent (Hilal-e-Ahman) and the Sangi Foundation were most often mentioned.

When heads of households were asked about their satisfaction by aid category, the majority of survey participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied at both the two- and ten-month marks. Overall, higher satisfaction levels tend to correspond to levels of higher visibility and presence, thus being associated with the provider of aid rather than the goods or services received. For example, in Abbottabad where INGOs do not appear as the main provider in any aid category, the satisfaction level with them was significantly lower than average. Conversely, in Battagram and Mansehra, where INGOs were identified as the principal providers in several categories, satisfaction levels with INGOs were higher. This may be a function of the expectations attached to different types of aid providers.

5. Dissatisfaction with Assistance Received Seems to be Associated with Problems in the Aid Distribution Process Rather Than with the Aid Itself.

The levels of dissatisfaction with the aid provided varied by geography. Overall, dissatisfaction seemed to be highest in Battagram and Kohistan, and lowest in Mansehra and Abbottabad. The main reason for dissatisfaction with the assistance received was the perception of inequity in the aid distribution process, both early in the relief efforts after the earthquake and at the time of the survey. Comfort, cultural appropriateness, timeliness and quantity were also cited as contributing to dissatisfaction. For example, 15% of those who received assistance with shelter were unhappy with the services that they received at the two-month mark. The two primary reasons cited were the unequal

distribution of services (33%) and the lack of comfort in the tents and/or camps (33%) due primarily to the lack of weather-proof tents. At the ten-month mark, 17% of those who received assistance with shelter cited dissatisfaction, with lack of comfort being the primary reason (38%) followed by a perceived lack of equity (24%). Cultural appropriateness also played a role as it became impossible for women to observe purdah in the tents and camps.

Issues of equity appeared to surface again among all survey respondents when asked a related question on aspects of aid distribution that were not going well at the time of the survey. Over half (56%) felt that the distribution system overall was not accurate. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents specifically cited problems with government aid distribution while a slightly lower number (18%) attributed problems to favoritism among political parties.

6. Consultation with Aid Recipients was Minimal.

In humanitarian assistance, consultation with the affected populations on the type of aid needed and the process of aid distribution is considered to be good practice. Consultation ensures that the voice of the beneficiary is incorporated into the provision of assistance, thus aligning assistance with needs and cultural and contextual norms. In trying to assess the level of consultation in Pakistan we asked the respondents to rate their level of participation in decision-making efforts relating to the restoration of livelihoods, shelter and food on a scale of 1 to 5.

In the relief and rehabilitation efforts following the Pakistan earthquake, it appears that there was minimal consultation with those who were affected. Most households reported that they had no input in the decision-making processes related to the restoration of livelihoods (98%), shelter (98%), and food assistance (97%) (see Table 8).

CONCLUSION

Our research in Pakistan suggests that one year after the devastating earthquake, the situation among those affected remains dire. Over 63% of the population has suffered significant income disruption and 60% remain displaced. As indicated in Table 3, the level of self-sufficiency has dropped significantly across many different categories. In a community where independence is prized, this reduction in self-sufficiency is particularly difficult. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of those affected have a pessimistic outlook on life and state that their lives will never be normal again. "People have lost their houses, livestock, businesses. We are leading a miserable life," said a respondent from Abbotabad. Forty-two percent (42%) state that their lives are not yet normal. Only 4% of the affected feel as if their lives are normal again. Further, the vulnerability of the earthquake-affected in the face of the impending winter should also be considered. Approximately 37% of the earthquake-affected reported that their winter needs were not met last year. With large proportions of those displaced still living in tents and camps with limited access to water and lacking the restoration of education and medical facilities, the level of hardship this year will be significant.

The intent of this research was to assess beneficiary perceptions of aid effectiveness. Those who received humanitarian assistance expressed appreciation and satisfaction. However, it should also be noted that the coverage of humanitarian assistance was inadequate in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and continues to be so. A significant proportion of people with acute needs report not receiving assistance with many basic services, even today. "The earthquake caused vast destruction and rain caused great damage. Whatever relief was provided, it was totally insufficient. Some areas did not receive aid due to their high elevation," said a respondent from the village of Besian in the Manshera district.

Dissatisfaction with the aid received stemmed from a perceived lack of equity and a perceived lack of understanding of the discomfort of the affected by the providers of assistance. Therefore, it is important that future aid efforts begin with a clear needs assessment that is shared among the various service providers, including the local and national governments, so that the extent of need is clearly communicated. Consultation with beneficiaries to align goods and services with needs, and more transparent distribution processes would greatly enhance beneficiary satisfaction. Perhaps greater coordination in the provision of assistance will increase the coverage to ensure more equitable provision of aid.

APPENDIX A: TABLES AND GRAPHS

TABLE 1: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

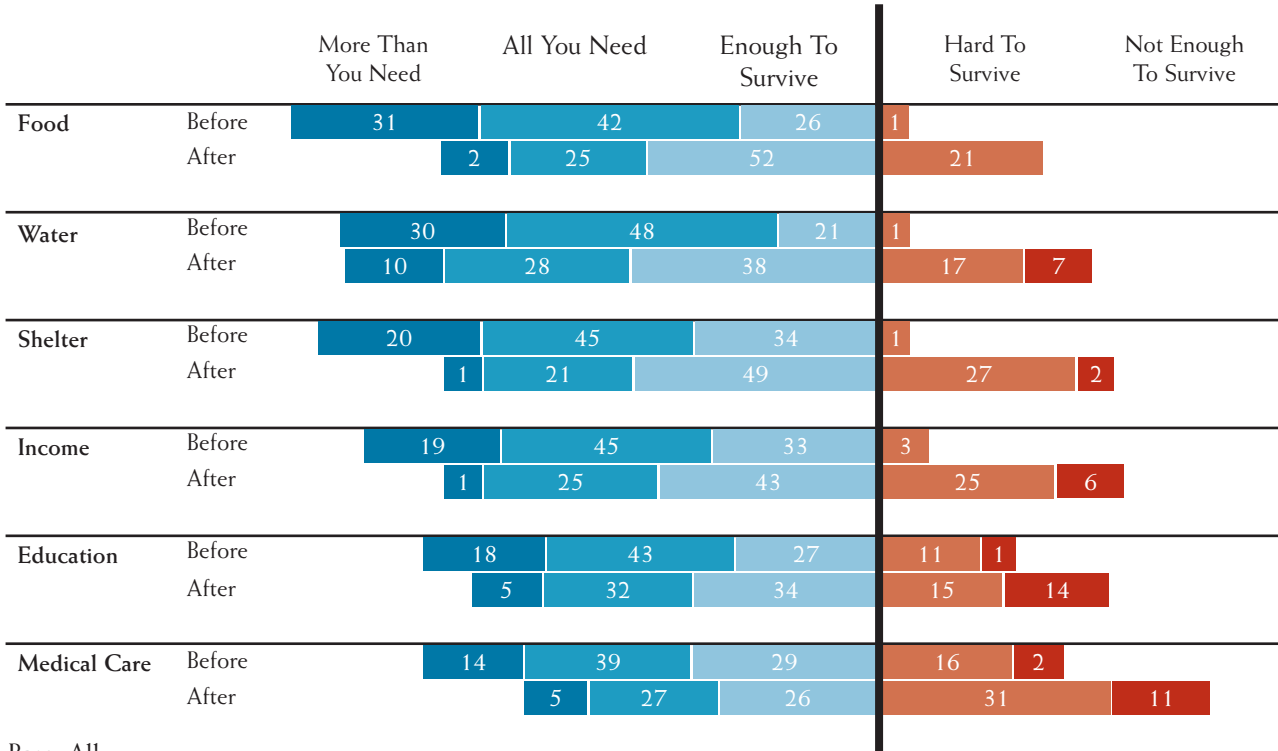
District	All	Abbottabad	Mansehra	Batagram	Shangla	Kohistan
Number of Respondents	621	125	125	124	123	124
Primary Occupations (Prior to Earthquake)	Non-Farm Laborer (24%) Farm Laborer (13%) Government/Military (13%)	Government/Military (20%) Non-Farm Laborer (17%) Skilled Worker (16%) Private Sector (16%)	Non-Farm Laborer (22%) Petty Business Trade (18%) Government/Military (16%)	Farm Laborer (27%) Farmer (25%) Government/Military (12%)	Non-Farm Laborer (47%) Petty Business Trade (21%) Skilled Worker (8%)	Non-Farm Laborer (31%) Farm Laborer (23%) Farmer (21%)
Mean Age	42.9	44.3	41.2	46.6	38.8	43.4
Mean Literacy Level (%)	50	73	67	47	40	24
Injury or Death in Family (%)	30	10	55	52	12	23

TABLE 2: INCOME LEVELS BEFORE AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE (%)

Pakistani Rupees	US Dollars	Before	After
<1500	<25	6	30
1500-3000	25-50	26	23
3000-4500	50-75	26	17
4500-6000	75-100	15	12
6000+	100+	27	17
No Response	No Response	0	1

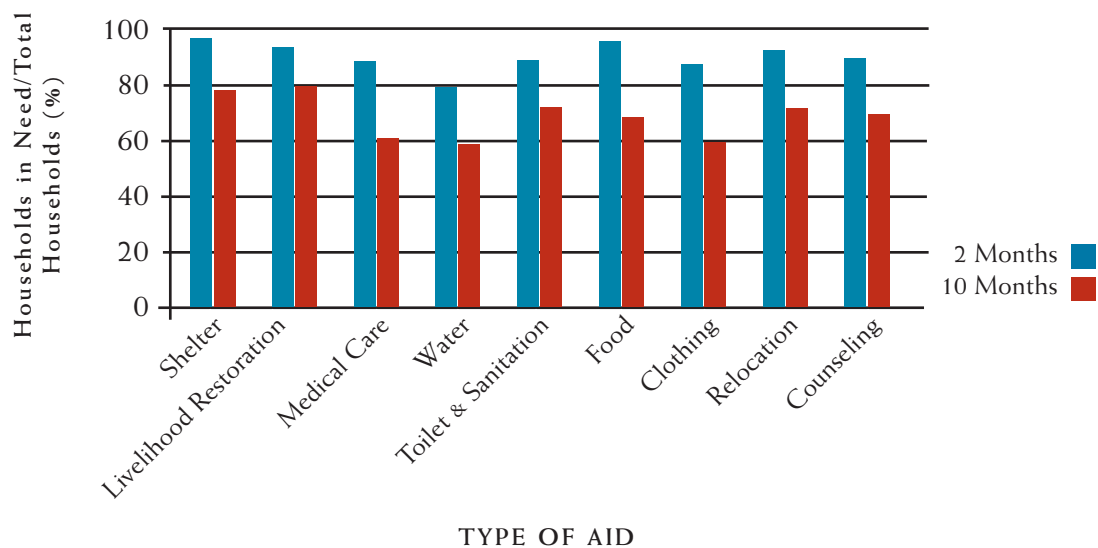
Base: All

TABLE 3: AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS' STANDARDS OF LIVING BEFORE AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE (%)



Base: All

TABLE 4: HOUSEHOLDS IN "GREAT" OR "VERY GREAT" NEED OF AID (%)



Base: All

TABLE 5: HOUSEHOLDS NOT RECEIVING AID AT TWO MONTHS AND TEN MONTHS (%)

Type of Aid	Two Months	Ten Months
Clothing	53	64
Water	52	57
Livelihood Restoration	52	56
Toilet & Sanitation	54	55
Relocation	50	54
Food	27	52
Medical Care	41	46
Counseling	37	39
Shelter	27	38

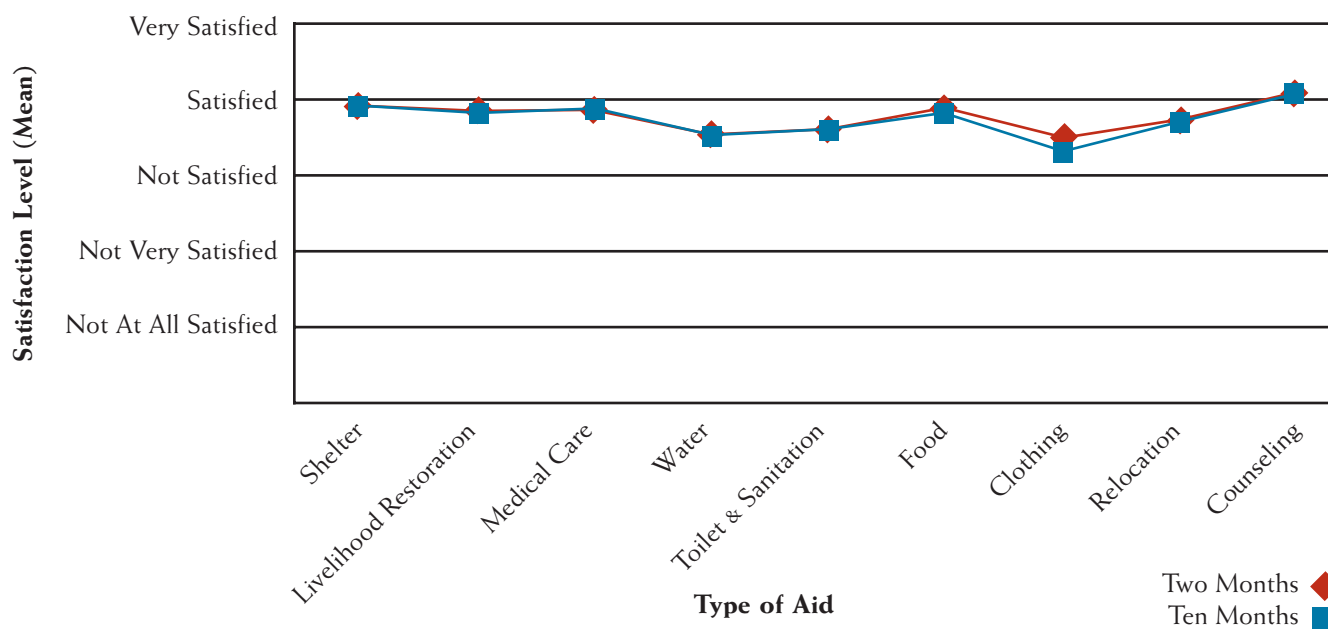
Base: Households in need of aid at two months (Range: 543-615) and ten months (Range: 513-598)

TABLE 6: PRINCIPAL GROUP HELPING WITH AID ACCORDING TO AFFECTED FAMILIES (%)

Type of Aid	Month	Government	International NGO	National NGO	Individuals	Other/Do Not Know
Shelter	2 Months	42	24	10	18	6
	10 Months	32	30	6	17	15
Livelihood Restoration	2 Months	58	6	2	10	24
	10 Months	51	9	2	11	27
Medical Care	2 Months	28	17	8	23	24
	10 Months	19	22	9	22	28
Water	2 Months	13	13	9	27	38
	10 Months	10	18	5	25	42
Toilet & Sanitation	2 Months	13	30	13	17	27
	10 Months	11	35	7	11	38
Food	2 Months	35	25	6	19	15
	10 Months	7	27	7	21	38
Clothing	2 Months	11	5	5	50	29
	10 Months	3	6	3	37	51
Relocation	2 Months	26	11	11	33	19
	10 Months	30	15	4	26	25
Counseling	2 Months	11	5	5	50	29
	10 Months	3	6	3	37	51

Base: Households that received aid at two months (Range: 275-451) and ten months (Range: 214-378)

TABLE 7: SATISFACTION WITH AID PROVIDED



Base: Households that received aid at two months (Range: 275-451) and ten months (Range: 214-378)

TABLE 8: CONSULTATION WITH AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS ON AID PROVISION (%)

Type of Aid	Not Consulted	Consulted
Shelter	98	2
Livelihood Restoration	98	2
Food	97	3

Base: All