

Urgent shelter needed for Indonesian quake victims ahead of rainy season – UN



An earthquake survivor washes dishes by the river at Muaro Village in West Sumatra, Indonesia

14 October 2009 – The top United Nations emergency relief official took a helicopter tour today of the worst affected rural areas in the wake of last month’s earthquake in the Indonesian island of Sumatra, flying over valleys ravaged by dozens of landslides.

“We need to work with the Government to ensure temporary shelter solutions quickly, with the rainy season soon upon us, but then move to more durable housing as soon as possible,” Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said of the quake, which killed over 700 people, with 300 more missing, and injured over 2,200.

One community he visited lost more than 130 people, with many of the bodies unrecoverable and the survivors, still in shock, wondering how and where they can rebuild their lives. Hospitals, schools, infrastructure and 135,000 homes were severely damaged, according to initial assessments, especially in Padang city and the Padang Paramian district.

“People are thinking about how they should rebuild their homes, but the issue is also whether many should be relocated away from the landslide risk, as this part of Indonesia is so earthquake prone,” Mr. Holmes said. “The fact that today is the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction serves to remind us that disaster reduction measures have to be a huge priority in Indonesia.”

He met with the governor of West Sumatra, the director of the Indonesian National Disaster Management Agency (BPNB) and representatives of the many international humanitarian agencies now on the ground, commending the Government for responding effectively and coordinating well with the significant international response.

Last week the humanitarian community, in close consultation with the Government, launched a \$38-million Humanitarian Response Plan, identifying acute needs to be addressed within 90 days and identifying 74 projects.

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