

World Trade Centre tragedy - Oxfam GB concerned that people of Afghanistan could bear brunt of retaliation

Oxfam is deeply shocked and saddened by the attacks and the huge loss of life in America on Tuesday.

This tragedy has resulted in much discussion now taking place on the possibility of retaliation against Afghanistan. Because of this it has been necessary to withdraw our seven foreign staff in the country, and improve security for our 170 local staff there. This will not immediately prevent us continuing our essential work providing food to more than 250,000 people in desperate need. However if supplies of wheat from the UN's World Food Programme are stopped or delayed because of security risks, Oxfam will not be able to continue this distribution.

Oxfam's food supply work in Afghanistan is essential as part of the international response to help five million people living on the brink of starvation because of the continued three year drought, and the war in the north of the country. As a result more than two million people have already left their homes, or become refugees mainly in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran.

The situation is already critical and can only worsen with winter fast approaching. Food needs to get to the people before it starts snowing, making access to many provinces impossible.

As one of the world's poorest countries, continued aid for the people of Afghanistan is vital to prevent a deeper humanitarian crisis.

Oxfam hopes that policy makers when planning their response to Tuesday's attacks will take account of the serious humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and other parts of the world where people are already living on the brink of survival.

Notes for editors:

Oxfam GB has worked in Afghanistan since 1989. Our priorities there are health, improving people's livelihoods, and responding to emergencies.

For further information and interviews with Oxfam's Humanitarian Director contact Arup Biswas of the Oxfam Media Unit on 01865 312498.