



NEWS RELEASE

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CROFTERS WELCOME DELEGATION REPRESENTING FLOOD HIT REGION OF PAKISTAN

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) recently welcomed a delegation representing a Highland area of Pakistan whose people are rebuilding their lives after suffering from the devastating floods and political violence in recent years.

In summer 2010 the Swat Valley, a region in northern Pakistan whose climate and environment has been likened to that of Switzerland and which had been one of the most popular tourist locations in Pakistan, was devastated by floods unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. This killed many hundreds of people and destroyed thousands of homes. Prior to this the Taliban established power in the valley, enforcing Sharia law. When the Pakistani army entered the area more than 2 million people fled their homes to avoid the fighting.

The visiting delegation, from the University of Glasgow and Heritage Foundation Pakistan, consisted of Dr Azra and Peter Meadows, honorary lecturers from the University, and Mr Naheem Shah the Heritage Foundation's project manager. The University of Glasgow delegates together with Mrs Yasmeen Lari, CEO and Chair of Heritage Foundation Pakistan have played lead roles in a Scottish Government funded Humanitarian Assistance for Pakistan project to build emergency homes for families affected by the floods. Mr Naheem Shah has led the field work for this project which also involved other team members.

SCF researcher Iain MacKinnon said: "We learned from our visitors that the Swat Valley is an area that contains many rural communities and small farms with their own distinct culture and land based traditions."

"They have endured a great deal in recent years so it was very inspiring to hear Naheem Shah describe their response to such adversity, and the beautiful homes they are building, which are rising from the flood. That they are doing so themselves using traditional materials available locally – such as bamboo and lime plaster – suggests that they are a capable and resilient people with a strong sense of community and of responsibility to each other and to their homeland."

Iain MacKinnon added: "We found strong resonances between the Swat Valley and crofting areas in the Highlands, even to the extent of antagonism between landlords and the tenants who work the land. We were told that at the moment their small farmers do not have a representative group to stand for them. So, who knows, perhaps the SCF could be a model for such an organisation."

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Notes to editors

- The building project in the Swat Valley has been supported by the Scottish Government's International Development Fund for Humanitarian Assistance Programme to Pakistan and ran from autumn 2010 to late winter 2011. A related project in the nearby Siran Valley is providing disaster management and guidance for rural women and children. It is also funded by the Scottish Government, and runs from 2010 to 2013. Both projects link the University of Glasgow with Heritage Foundation Pakistan and aim to ameliorate suffering in these very isolated mountain communities.
- More information on the Heritage Foundation's work in the Swat Valley can be found on: <http://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/Page.aspx?n=1636>
- A photo of the delegates visiting a croft in the west Highlands can be obtained from the Scottish Crofting Federation: 01599 530005.