

Completed by: CWSA
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Forum: ACT Forum Pakistan

Type of emergency: Pakistan Earthquake 2025
Date of emergency (if rapid onset): January 2026 (Ongoing)

1. The nature of the emergency

On 19 January 2026, a moderate-to-strong earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale struck northern Gilgit-Baltistan, with its epicentre located approximately 50 kilometres north-northwest of Karimabad, Hunza, in close proximity to the Yash Kuk Glacier and the Chuperson Valley. The earthquake was felt across Upper Hunza (Gojal), lower Hunza, parts of Ghizer district, and adjoining valleys, causing widespread panic among residents and tourists. Chuperson Valley has since emerged as the focal point of concern among humanitarian actors, government authorities, and the public due to the concentration of damage, winter exposure, and limited accessibility.

The primary secondary hazard triggered by the event was widespread rockfall, which caused most of the reported damage. The Chipursan Valley in Upper Hunza was the most severely affected area. Minor head injuries of two children were reported, along with damage to houses, livestock shelters, and community structures.

The earthquake occurred during peak winter conditions, when temperatures in Upper Hunza routinely fall between -10°C and -15°C , with snowfall, icy winds, and limited daylight hours. These conditions have significantly exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Families evacuated damaged homes immediately after the tremors, spending nights outdoors or in makeshift arrangements due to fear of aftershocks. Others have remained inside partially damaged structures, prioritising warmth over safety due to the absence of alternative shelter.

Chuperson Valley is geographically isolated, accessible primarily through narrow mountain roads that are highly vulnerable to landslides, snow accumulation, and blockages. The earthquake triggered minor landslides and further weakened already fragile access routes, delaying assessment teams and restricting the flow of emergency assistance. Damage to irrigation channels, footbridges, and local pathways has further disrupted daily life, cutting off access to water sources, grazing areas, and neighbouring villages. Livelihoods in Chuperson Valley are heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture, livestock rearing, and seasonal cross-border and domestic tourism. The earthquake has interrupted these activities at a time when households rely heavily on stored food, fuel, and winter reserves. The combined effect of seismic damage, winter exposure, and geographic isolation has transformed the earthquake into a life-threatening emergency, requiring immediate winterised humanitarian assistance to prevent further loss of life and long-term destitution.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency *(please include your source of information)*

While the earthquake affected a geographically limited area, its impact in Upper Hunza—particularly in Chuperson Valley—constitutes a large-scale, rapid-onset emergency due to the severity of damage, winter conditions, and the limited coping capacity of affected communities.

Preliminary assessments indicate that over 100 houses have been completely destroyed, while nearly 200 additional houses are severely cracked and unsafe for habitation. Damage to water supply channels, micro-hydropower systems, and cattle sheds has been widespread, resulting in loss of livestock and increased risks to food security and livelihoods. Rockfalls and landslides triggered by the earthquake have blocked access roads, while electricity, communication, and internet services remain disrupted, hampering emergency.

Earthquake tremors were felt across the Ghizer District. Rockfall and road blockages were reported in the Immit valley. Near Badswat Lake, a rockfall struck a motorcycle, resulting in one fatality and one injury.

In Upper Hunza, damaged footbridges and mountain tracks have significantly restricted movement between villages, hampering access to markets, health facilities, and relief points. Portions of local access roads connecting Chuperson Valley to Gulmit and Sost remain unstable, increasing isolation and response costs.

The timing of the earthquake during winter has amplified vulnerabilities. Displaced families are facing prolonged exposure to cold, limited access to heating fuel, and heightened health risks, particularly respiratory infections, hypothermia, and complications among children, older persons, and those with pre-existing conditions. The cumulative impact of shelter damage, winter exposure, and livelihood disruption places affected communities at high risk of deteriorating humanitarian conditions without timely intervention.

The analysis of the earthquake-affected Chipurson Valley drew extensively on information from the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority, local civil society organizations, community elders and residents, as well as print, electronic, and social media sources. Reports highlighted damage to buildings, roads, and landslides, which helped prioritize support for the most remote and hard-to-reach areas. Vulnerable groups identified included women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, and subsistence farmers, shaping relief priorities such as shelter, winterized tents, medical assistance, and food security. Community feedback emphasized urgent needs for emergency shelter, food, clean water, and healthcare, and underscored the importance of early intervention to prevent further harm. Residents also guided geographical and temporal prioritization by identifying blocked routes and highlighting winter-related risks. Finally, local input revealed gaps in government and NGO responses, emphasizing the risk of delayed aid in isolated villages.

Our partner Karakoram Area Development Organisation (KADO) has shared in its displacement situation assessment that the latest information from local support organizations in Sost and Gulmit, affected families from Chipurson Valley are being accommodated in safer areas of Upper Hunza (Gojal), which is their preferred location due to strong family and social ties with local communities. Initially, hotels, vacant houses, and homes of relatives were offered as accommodation options; however, hotels proved unviable due to harsh weather conditions and the lack of heating and adequate living arrangements. Consequently, families are now staying in vacant houses or with relatives across Sost and Gulmit, and due to differences in space availability, family connections, and living conditions, some households may move between these areas to secure safer, warmer, and more suitable accommodation.

Assessment Reports are enclosed.

1. CWSA & KADO Joint Assessment Report
2. AKAH/FOCUS Situation Report Earthquake in Gilgit-Baltistan (Chipursan Valley)
3. Situation Report by Agri Business Support Fund & Local LSO
4. Situation Report on Displacement-KADO

3. Local and national capacity

Affected communities in Chuperson Valley and Upper Hunza have demonstrated strong social cohesion and resilience in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Families have taken in displaced relatives, shared limited food and fuel supplies, and collectively cleared debris from pathways and water channels. Community members have attempted temporary repairs to damaged houses using locally available materials. However, these coping mechanisms are severely constrained by winter conditions, limited resources, and the scale of destruction.

At the provincial level, the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority is leading coordination, rapid assessments, and information sharing, working closely with district administrations and local authorities. District Disaster Management Authorities are conducting village-level verifications and supporting relief distributions where access allows. The National Disaster Management Authority is providing technical guidance, early warnings regarding aftershocks and winter hazards, and coordination support.

Humanitarian actors present in the region include the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, a small number of local NGOs, and community-based organisations. These actors have provided limited emergency assistance, including tents, basic food items, and first aid supplies. However, the humanitarian footprint in Upper Hunza remains limited compared to the scale of needs, particularly in remote valleys such as Chuperson. Logistical constraints, harsh weather, and high operational costs significantly limit response capacity.

Media coverage and major international humanitarian appeals have so far been limited relative to the scale of needs; crises of this nature often receive less global funding and attention than larger earthquakes elsewhere.

The affected population and geographic area are relatively small and remote compared to major national disasters. While damage and humanitarian needs are severe at the local level particularly due to shelter loss, displacement, and exposure to extreme colds they do not constitute a national-level emergency. Government response and local NGO efforts are ongoing, but critical gaps remain in shelter, winterized assistance, and essential supplies. Immediate support including shelter, winter relief items, medical care, safe water, and access to affected areas is urgently required to prevent the situation from worsening, especially under sub-zero conditions.

4. Key needs and gaps

The earthquake has generated urgent, multi-sectoral humanitarian needs in Chuperson Valley and surrounding areas of Upper Hunza. Shelter and winterisation represent the most immediate life-saving gaps. A large proportion of affected households are living in partially damaged homes or makeshift shelters that offer little protection against extreme cold. There is a critical need for winter kits, including blankets, mattresses, tarpaulins, and safe heating solutions, to prevent cold-related illness and deaths. Multipurpose cash assistance is also urgently required. Due to market disruptions, damaged access routes, and limited income opportunities during winter, many households lack the financial means to purchase fuel, food, medicines, and materials for minor repairs. Cash assistance would allow families to prioritise their most urgent needs in a dignified and flexible manner, while also supporting local markets where functional.

Health risks are increasing due to cold exposure, overcrowding, and limited access to services. Damaged pathways and long distances to health facilities restrict timely care, particularly for pregnant women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Psychosocial distress is evident, with fear of aftershocks, loss of homes, and uncertainty about recovery affecting mental well-being.

Significant information gaps remain. Disaggregated data by sex, age, and vulnerability is limited, particularly in remote villages. Verified figures on displacement, shelter damage, and specific winterisation needs continue to evolve as access improves. Comprehensive multi-sectoral assessments are constrained by weather and terrain, delaying longer-term recovery planning.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.

Capacity details of forum members with the intention to respond are given below

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise
Community World Service Asia	Upper Hunza districts of Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan	Emergency Response

5. Potential responses

Community World Service Asia proposes a time-bound emergency response targeting 300 earthquake-affected households in Chuperson Valley, Upper Hunza (Gojal), with a focus on winter survival and immediate recovery. The proposed response prioritises the most vulnerable households, including female-headed families, households with children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and families whose homes are fully or severely damaged.

Each targeted household will receive a winter kit comprising four blankets, four mattresses, one tarpaulin sheet, and one kerosene oil heater to ensure protection against extreme cold and provide a minimum level of thermal comfort. In addition, households will receive multipurpose cash assistance amounting to PKR 60,000, delivered in two instalments of PKR 30,000, to enable families to meet urgent needs such as heating fuel, food, medicines, and minor shelter repairs.

Implementation will be carried out in close coordination with the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority, district administration, and community representatives to ensure transparency, avoid duplication, and maximise coverage. CWSA's existing presence and experience in Hunza will facilitate timely delivery, community engagement, and accountability. This response is designed to complement government relief efforts and address critical gaps during the peak winter period, reducing immediate risks and supporting early recovery.

With an established office in the area, a dedicated project team will be recruited to support the implementation of the proposed activities.

Immediate financial assistance is required to launch this life-saving initiative, as the government has appealed for support, with losses amounting to billions and exceeding its response capacity.

The projected response plan spans three months and requires approximately USD 150,000.