

RISING HOPE

HEALTH ORIENTED PREVENTIVE EDUCATION



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2008

EARTHQUAKE



HOPE

Chairperson's Message

The earthquake struck the northern areas of Pakistan in October 2005 including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The nation stood up to the catastrophe and every kind of emergency relief was provided. Individuals as well as organizations did their best to provide support to the earthquake victims either in the form of cash or kind. The government and the army worked diligently day and night to meet the emergency in which thousands of lives were lost.



Dr. Mubina Agboatwalla
Chairperson

After the emergency came the rehabilitative stage. Over a period of time people became busy in their lives. The support began dwindling as many donors lost interest, but those stricken by the calamity, still struggle surrounded by these same mountains which they witnessed crumbling down. Many have lost their entire families, some are living as orphans, and some have lost their bread earners. Though they are haunted by the memories of their school mates who were crushed under the collapsed school building the children attend the same makeshift schools. Rebuilding their houses where they lost their loved ones is emotionally devastating for them. Financially, too, they face an uphill task.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, HOPE initially sent a 17 member team to deal with the emergency. Two years down the road HOPE has not reduced its support to the victims, frequently visiting the earthquake afflicted areas to provide as much assistance as possible. Realizing the fact that the people still need the help, HOPE has set up office in Muzaffarabad and Bagh in June 2007, concentrating its activities mainly on a nutrition rehabilitative project in collaboration with UNICEF. HOPE covers 32 health facilities in Muzaffarabad District and 23 in Bagh District. Many of these health facilities are located in the far off mountains. Calamities generally affect the nutrition status first as food supply chains are affected the worst hit being; pregnant, lactating mothers and children. Besides this HOPE is working on providing other support as well.

In the summer break of 2007, nine students from various schools in Karachi volunteered as internees and visited AJK with me. They visited remote areas, communities, health facilities and schools, talking to various people and getting to know their plight. In this special supplement, we have tried to bring forth the sufferings of our dear countrymen, how they are coping with life, how the earthquake affected life styles and outlook as well as their financial status. This will give our readers an idea of the type of work HOPE is doing, what are the needs of the people and how you can collaborate with HOPE to help alleviate the sufferings of the earthquake victims.

Dr. Mubina Agboatwalla

Director of HOPE



Mr. Tariq Niazi



Dr. Khalid Omer

Helpers of HOPE



Headed by
Mr. Saad Amanullah Khan



Mr. Danish Agboatwalla
U.S. HOPE Coordinator

Editorial

After the powerful earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck AJK, HOPE, among other NGOs, deployed its emergency relief team to the Northern areas. While disasters take a profound emotional and financial toll, the immediate need is to reach out and help alleviate the sufferings of the victims, addressing long-term needs and requirements of basic amenities for the sufferers.



While still in the emergency phase of the disaster, HOPE launched a long term program to help the locals combat the odds that faced them. It focused mainly on providing education and health programs. HOPE helps to communicate the needs of the vulnerable inhabitants to the donors. The NGO works closely to the local community it serves, to ensure that every detail is covered. HOPE under the supervision of Dr. Mubina Agboatwalla extends its gratitude to all its benefactors in helping its projects succeed in the Northern areas and looks forward to added donations for the earthquake victims.

Ms. Ismat Asad Ali

A Mother's Recount.

Forty-year old, Rashida Bibi's life changed dramatically after the destructive earthquake hit Azad Jammu and Kashmir. She is now forced to live in a small shelter-home in the district of Chela. Prior to the earthquake Rashida Bibi had seen much better days. She lived in a two-storey house with her husband and two children. The house was built on two hundred and fifty yards. The family also owned a six hundred yard piece of land and a car. Her husband, Mohammad Sharif, who had been a kidney patient for the past eight years, was a truck driver prior to his illness. Since then, Rashida has been the breadwinner for her family. Previously the family lived off a thriving business of live-stock farming.

Rashida's home and her in-laws house just next door did not survive the strong tremors and collapsed. Rashida's father-in-law was crushed to death in the earthquake when their house collapsed over him while he was asleep. Rashida and her mother-in-law Fazl Noor were working in the fields when the earthquake struck, they ran towards the collapsing house but could not save Fazal Noor's husband. However, Mohammad Sharif, Rashida Bibi's husband who was also present in the house, managed to escape with a broken leg. Her children Rahim and Karim were in school at that time and luckily survived when the teachers forced them out of the crumbling school building to safety.

Compensation from the government amounted to Rupees one hundred and fifty thousand. This amount was spent on her husband's illness and reconstruction of the houses. The small amount that remains is used very frugally by Rashida on daily necessities. Rashida expresses sad facts that she and her family witnessed in the aftermath of the earthquake, as far as distribution of relief activities were concerned. The enormous amounts of aid that poured into the region were unfairly distributed and many a times hoarded, just to be discarded at a later date. The shelters and ration cards issued were used unfairly by the affluent residents, leaving the destitute to further suffer the harsh weather and hunger.

Despite having no man-power, it is commendable that Rashida Bibi struggles hard to pull the family together and works alone untiringly in the fields to earn the daily bread. Her only aim being to bring back the same stability which they once enjoyed. Since Fazl Noor's mental stability has been deeply affected after the death of her husband, she is unable to assist her daughter-in-law as she did.

We all need to join hands and come forward to provide help to people like Rashida Bibi.

Amatul Haseen, Maheen Asad



HOPE in Muzaffarabad

A nine-day survey trip to Muzaffarabad and Bagh (AJK) was organized by HOPE, to see how the inhabitants are coping after the disaster of the 8th of October 2005. HOPE plays an active part in the rehabilitation programme in the earthquake-affected areas. Arsla Jawaid, Aamina Siddiqi, Amtul Baweja, Anusha Asif, Maheen Asad, Shyaan Hasan and myself volunteered to spend two weeks of our summer vacations with HOPE at their Muzaffarabad set-up.

We all had different ideas and expectations of what we would experience on this trip. Crossing the Kohala Bridge separating Punjab from Azad



lush green mountains with deep white gashes cutting across the greenery bore tell-tale marks of landslides. As we travelled to various settlements near Muzaffarabad, we came across the debris of collapsed buildings yet to be cleared away. Tombstones on the mountain sides, inscribed with the date "2005" bore witness of the thousands of lives lost in the earthquake. Many graves were heartbreakingly small.

The dismal stories we heard from the people were heart-wrenching. The earthquake had changed their lives drastically; they had lost loved ones, homes, limbs, livelihoods, schools, friends.... everything! Yet they were now stoic about their tribulations, and are striving ahead. Although they all put up a brave front, we could sense the underlying despondency. Fearing the earthquake again many refuse to rebuild their homes. Wounds engraved on their hearts serve as reminders of all that they lost.

Our trip to Kashmir was beyond our wildest imagination. The reconstruction is far slower than what the rest of the country pleases to think. The unhealed scars still run deep, yet despite the misery, the illness and accidents we encountered in Kashmir, what remains in our memories of this an unforgettable trip is the warmth and bravado of the people looking towards HOPE !

Ghazal Farrukhi

A Helping hand from UNICEF

The HOPE Nutrition Project is now providing services to 32 Health Centres in the earthquake affected areas of Muzaffarabad as well as 23 Health Centres in Bagh District. During the earthquake most of the families were displaced, as a result children could not get adequate nourishment for months. Their miseries were compounded by the severe winters in the mountains. As a result nearly 60% children have become malnourished which increases their susceptibility to different infections like diarrhea and pneumonia resulting in a higher rate of child mortality.

HOPE has initiated this project with UNICEF, to provide a nutritious food supplement known as UNIMIX for mothers and children. The HOPE team is well established in AJK. It has an office at Muzaffarabad and Bagh and is working in the health centres with Doctors and Lady Health Visitors dealing with women and children. Many of these health centres were destroyed during the earthquake and have now been set up in tents while others are in the process of reconstruction. Most of them are located in the mountains where the HOPE team makes daily visits. Traveling a long distance of 2 to 3 hours, working determinedly with the doctors and LHVs to improve the nutritional condition of children and women and deal with their health problems.



In addition, HOPE team also visits surrounding villages and interacts with the communities to provide counseling on health issues. The devastation that took place during the earthquake has shattered the people and it will take a long time to bring life back to normal. Health is an important priority and HOPE is presently working in this sector with UNICEF providing UNIMIX for the emaciated population esp. women and children. There is need to join hands with HOPE to assist in the rehabilitation process in the other areas as well.



Dr. Mubina Agboatwalla

How Green Was My Valley



The seemingly beautiful lake in the above photograph, gives a sense of peace and serenity. However, buried deep within are more than 300 families from 3 villages, which just disappeared under the earth after the earthquake. The huge crater formed was filled up by surface water, giving it the semblance of a lake.

Dr. Mubina Agboatwalla

Bearing The Brunt Of Mother Nature

After a long day's work, often forty-year old Safia Bibi would sit near the window overlooking the river, absorbing the beauty and serenity. Her life in her small one hundred yard house in the valley with her husband and four children was almost like heaven. Little had she foreseen how short-lived her heaven on earth was to be.

The October eighth earthquake spelt doom for Safia Bibi and her family. From a successful housewife with a happy household and the sound of



laughter around her, her world changed into one filled with gloom and despondency after losing her husband.

The widow recalls that the first night after the earthquake was the most miserable one of her life. As darkness spread bringing an end to the

fateful day she and her children slept under the open sky in the severe cold. Though she received Rs.125,000/ as compensation, for Safia Bibi nothing in the world will be enough to recompense the loss she suffered on that dreadful October day.

Amtul Haseen
Maheen Asad

Health

Health is a fundamental human right. One that is vital to the continuity of the human race. The people of AJK were used to the hardships of living in this remote part, but when the devastating earthquake in October 2005 struck it shattered their simple lives, reducing them to a pitiable state. They waited helplessly to receive the basic amenities of life.

The people of AJK had limited facilities of basic healthcare. Help that came immediately after the earthquake was rudimentary and only catered to the needs of the critically injured. Those with external injuries or cuts were left to fend for themselves as best they could.

The earthquake had destroyed the already-primitive sewage and sanitation system of AJK and piles of human waste lay amid the rubble. The fetid grime attracted flies and mosquitoes, which would settle on exposed food, thus rendering the food germ-ridden and a major cause of gastro-intestinal diseases. Water-borne diseases such as cholera were rampant, and there was an epidemic of T.B, numerous children also suffered from skin and respiratory diseases. The earthquake destroyed the houses in the region and forced the people to sleep under open skies, braving the harsh winter.



Hundreds perished due to the subzero temperatures. Simple diseases such as pneumonia were left untreated as there were not enough medicines available. Even if medicines were available, they were mostly inaccessible to those residing on the lofty mountains.

Help arrived on a national and international level, after the earthquake, financial and human aid was pouring in waiting to be fairly distributed. Especially commendable is assistance from Turkey, as they undertook to build a well equipped hospital. This was accomplished soon after the earthquake. The hospital provides excellent medical care in the district of Muzaffarabad. What deserved appreciation is that these excellent medical facilities are available free of cost to everyone.

The Government needs to step up its quality of aid provided to its suffering country-men.

Anusha Asif
Aamina Siddiqi

List of Collaborators

1. Embassy of Japan
2. Japanese Women Association
3. The Consulate of Germany
4. UNICEF
5. World Health Organization (WHO)
6. Centre for Disease Control, (CDC), Atlanta (USA)
7. Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati and Pakistan
8. John Hopkins School of Public Health, USA
9. The Asia Foundation
10. Rotary Club of Karachi, Metropolitan
11. Rotary Club of Karachi, Cosmopolitan
12. Rotary Club of Karachi, Continental
13. ARY Cash & Carry
14. Philantropists

Helpers of HOPE Committee

- Mr. Saad Amanullah Khan
- Ms. Anisa Atif
- Ms. Zeba Jawaid Iqbal
- Ms. Wajida Asad
- Mr. Muhammad Ifrahim
- Ms. Ismaa Khan
- Ms. Anisa Rashid
- Mrs. Nilofer Baig
- Ms. Seema Zuberi

Shattered Dreams in Chela

For Shamshad Jan, and Ghulam Rasool, life was no less than a fairy tale. After four years of a happily married life Shamshad Jan became an expectant mother. The family was complete in every sense of the word. All



they wished for now was their own home, for this they sacrificed a great deal to save up funds. By February 2005 they had accomplished their target and built the pride of their life- a neat three room, brick-house. However, Mother Nature had something in store for them. When the earthquake struck AJK in 2005, it brought every-

thing down; their dreams, their hopes, their happiness and... their house! The shock sent Shamshad Jan into early labor. Her daughter Badar Rasool, was born with deformed legs and despite expert medical care from the nearby Turkish-run hospital, till today, the child is unable to walk.

With uncontrollable tears, Shamshad Jan exclaims that she implored the Government repeatedly for some form of aid, but they did nothing to alleviate her misery. Ghulam Rasool is desperate for work as there is no source of income.

People like Shamshad Jan, who have lost not only their houses and families but also all hope of ever seeing better days ahead are the miserably victims of the earthquake. HOPE is providing respite to such sufferers.

Anusha Asif
Aamina Siddiqi

DREAMS UNFULFILLED

Mumtaz Akhter remembers Manshera, the town where she was born, spent her childhood, grew up with bitter-sweet memories, found love and was spending a beautiful life with her husband and five angelic children when suddenly she lost it all!

Now at fifty-five, with her dream-house leveled to the ground and three children dead, she is a walking corpse. To add to her plight, the merciless cold and lashing rains drove her and her family to Bela.

Samiullah, her sixty-four year old husband, comments that his wife had not smiled since the light of her eyes, her eldest son, Abdul Latif drowned eleven years ago. She had not yet recovered from the first shock when the second and deadlier one struck, taking away two more children from her.

As compensation, the government allotted them a piece of land in Bela but they did not receive any cash. An exorbitant sum was charged from them for a few sheets of corrugated iron. It is difficult to make two ends meet for such families as a large amount goes in medical care, which costs far more than it used to before the quake. These families are totally dependent upon private clinics, which charge astronomical amounts. Furthermore the fees of the less-than-qualified doctors have more than doubled. Children here suffer from jaundice, TB, respiratory and skin problems, and water-borne diseases such as cholera.

Many believe the earthquake to be a calamity and punishment from the Almighty. This family refutes the claim and is indignant about such views as they believe that such natural disasters are a test of faith.

Anusha Asif
Aamina Siddiqi



As I looked at the mountains!

Staring straight ahead at what has now been termed as the 'Earthquake Point', I was gripped by an instant realization that a person's worth is not measured by his material standing but more so by the life he leads and how he interacts with the people around him.



It is human nature to lead a life trying to fuel a hunger for worldly luxuries. But as I stood a few meters away from this natural super structure, a symbol of power and might, I recalled how it was jolted and the way it crumbled within minutes. I truly understood the meaning of the word worthlessness.

Arsla Jawaid

To me, death had always been a far-off prospect. It never occurred to me that it was something I would also have to face too, but when I fixed my gaze on the heavily dissected and harshly scarred mountains, the sight reminded me of death - painful, agonizing, and in the blink of an eye gone were visions of a long and happy life ahead. Only morbid thoughts raced through my mind. I was frightened for my very existence. I prayed to God to take me in a painless manner, keeping my dignity. The idea of being buried under piles of rubble was haunting. Call me selfish if you like but at that point all I cared about was my own life. The reality of the uncertainty of life hit me, as I realized that at times, life can be painfully short.

Aamina Siddiqi

Mountains have always stood as bulwarks of permanence and splendor. I have personally always associated mountains with might. Keeping this perspective in mind, my initial reaction at seeing the mountains was that of shock. It looked as if the mountains had been crudely dissected and remained a shadow of their former majesty. After recovering from the stun, I realized the extent of God's might and power, and my insignificance in comparison.

Anusha Asif

The magnitude of ruin was beyond anything I could have ever imagined. The impact it could have on an entire population was beyond belief. I doubt I can ever wipe off that image, of complete destruction, from my mind.

Shyaan Hassan

The first thought that came to my mind after I saw the mountain was that such a mighty structure which seems impossible to move had been destroyed within seconds. This showed the might and power of God. I also felt the pain of the earthquake victims whose loved ones had been crushed under tonnes of earth.

Maheen Asad

City-dwellers like me generally associate Kashmir with towering mountains and sparkling rivers. News of the earthquake 2 years ago did little to shatter this ideal. Earthquakes themselves are actually the least destructive natural catastrophes - it is the collapsing buildings and landslides that kill.

Actually seeing the impact the earthquake had in Muzaffarabad radically altered my perspective. The Himalayas - 'the roof of the world' - had been shaken, and there was still plenty of evidence of the destruction wrought. Looking at the earthquake-ravaged countryside, I felt intense sorrow. The huge, old mountains had given the world proof of their vulnerability to the mighty Lord. No longer did they have the same ability to inspire awe, fear and a sense of grandeur within people. I wondered to myself, with the mighty mountains weakened, what chance did we stand as humans?

Ghazal Asif

Looking at the carded mountain in the distance, I felt sad thinking about how nature had been destroyed in just a few moments. The area was almost the same as it was before the earthquake struck, but it looked like huge chunks had been deliberately cut and separated from the mountains. Looking at that mountain, I wanted to go closer and explore. I felt a surge of sympathy for the helpless people who once lived there.

Amtul Haseen Baweja

Better Prospects for Karim Jan

Karim Jan, a thirty year old woman, has been living in the district of Bela for the past twelve years. Unlike many other women she claims that her lifestyle has improved after the earthquake. This is largely due to the fact that her husband who is a laborer by profession has found more work after the quake disaster.

From a meager earning of a hundred or two hundred rupees per day her husband's daily wages have shot up to rupees six hundred per day. In the past he would work for perhaps two days and then be laid off for ten more but now with the rising demand of laborers for the construction of roads and houses her husband manages to find work every day. They have four daughters, two of whom go to school. The eldest attends a government school, which does not charge any fees. The younger daughter attends a private school which charges Rs.200/- entrance fee and a monthly fee of Rs.100/-.



Karim Jan narrates that when the earthquake struck her eldest daughter was at school. When the building collapsed, the girl escaped with minor injuries. Thankfully, even though nobody in her family lost their lives or received serious injuries, still the children have to be forced to go to school as the fear of what happened on 8th Oct.'05 lingers on.

Karim Jan claims that prices of staple food have skyrocketed immediately after the earthquake. For low-income families where a large percentage is spent on the purchase of wheat, rice, pulses and sugar, a sudden rise in prices left most families malnourished.

The government gave them a very nominal amount as compensation for their home; therefore they could not reconstruct it properly. The walls are substituted by thin wooden planks. The compensation was not only insufficient for the family but it was also received after a lapse of 6 months.

As compared to Chela District, the hardships faced by the people in Bela District were considerably greater, especially in terms of monetary hardships. The root cause being the women, who did not complement the family income.

Arsla Jawaid
Ghazal Asif

The Grass will be Greener!

Full of hope for her future - Sameena is one of the few girls amongst thousands who still dreams of a bright future!

When the earthquake struck, Sameena, like others of her age was at school. It seemed uncanny to her - surely it could only be a nightmare! The walls of her school began caving in around her. Spontaneously she rushed towards the exit. Inches away to safety she was suddenly trapped in a pocket amongst



the debris of the crumbling school house. Thankfully, when she was rescued she was not seriously hurt. The ruins of her school building still remain uncleared, a painful reminder of that fateful day. She was fortunate enough to escape with minor injuries but the mental anguish of having lost 35 of her classmates will always linger on.

After meeting this young girl, I realized that courage in adversity is truly a very strong and admirable quality to possess, and for most, hope for a better future is all that is keeping them going. The helping hand of HOPE provides strength to young girls like Sameena to achieve their dreams for the future.

Shayan Hassan

EARTHQUAKE TRAUMA

The only courage that matters is the one which gets you from one moment to the next.

Mignon McLaughlin

The general concept that prevails amongst on lookers is that the earthquake victims just need financial and medical aid. They forget that the victims are human and suffer extreme trauma in the wake of a natural disaster. Shattered memories of those happy moments before the quake, dreams devastated with agonizing cries for help, the helplessness and the loss of loved ones, none of which can be coped with easily.



Ageing folks thought it was Dooms Day and it was the wrath of God let loose on mankind, youngsters experienced disbelief and thought that it was all a bad dream from which they would wake up at any moment.

This catastrophic event left a lasting impression in the lives of these people not just on an individual but on a communal basis too. Unusual reactions are still witnessed even two years later.



We saw youngsters run out of their houses screaming and crying at the slightest tremor or rainfall. Mentally disturbed women who shiver and curl into a corner at the sight of dark clouds are the severely affected victims, who need psychological help and counseling to live normally and carry on their day to day life.

Traumatized by the disaster, some people are still in denial and do not want to recount the events of that day, living in the past talking about their lost ones.

Having lost the zest for life, frequently heard phrases from the victims are "Before this I dreamed of so much

"Of a happy life with my family...."

"I had so many dreams for my sons"

"My collapsed home, took down with it

my dreams:"

"I saved every thing to build a home for my family....its all gone now!"

"How can I plan a future without my loved ones?"

"WHY DREAM? WHAT IS THERE TO LOOK FORWARD TO?"

Through all of this gloom there shines HOPE and faith in GOD that helps them cope with the situation. Though they still need our monetary help, they also need a shoulder to cry on.

Shayaan Hassan

Education

When the 8th October 2005 earthquake struck Azad Kashmir and NWFP, one of the most heartbreaking aspects of the devastation wreaked, was that most of the victims were young schoolchildren. Hundreds of schools, most of them government-run had collapsed. Abandoned textbooks lay among the rubble - the young owners tragically gone forever.

For 3 months after the earthquake, all remaining schools in the affected region were closed, as emergency relief work took precedence over everything else. Even after the regional government announced schools to be reopened, it took a long time for the frightened, traumatized students to return to the classrooms where they had lost so many of their friends. Aid agencies such as UNICEF set up makeshift tent-schools in places where the school buildings once stood. Most of the children that the HOPE team surveyed in the Muzaffarabad-Bagh area said that they only returned to school six months later in 2006. Of course, not willingly but at the persistence of their parents. In many areas, schools launched campaigns to persuade reluctant parents to send their children back to school. Since more government schools collapsed as compared to private schools, many families in the region are stretching their earnings to send their children to private

schools, hoping to safeguard them from any future catastrophe.

In these two years, private schools and those run by NGOs and other charitable organisations have mushroomed in constructions built with earthquake-proof material. Children fill classrooms, seemingly back to normal. In a country where the literacy rate is barely 40%, the importance that the people of AJK give to education, irrespective of gender, is truly remarkable, especially considering the misfortune they have all been through. However, the earthquake has left an indelible mark. Even today Schools close at the slightest tremor, or even rain, as panic seizes the students and some of the teachers too. Teachers admit to having difficulty teaching these traumatised children, but are hopeful that this situation will improve with time.



The AJK UNICEF office maintains that a return to regular school routine is the best thing for these children whose lives have been changed by the natural disaster of October 8th. Certainly it can be seen that schools are slowly but surely returning to normal. Despite all they have suffered, it is heart-

warming to see that the people of this region are returning to normality, showing that these people here have not lost their faith and continue striving forward, especially where education is concerned.

Ghazal Asif

Shukrina Bibi - A Resident Of Chehla Bandi

Thirty-year-old Shukrina Bibi, an earthquake victim is now a resident of the Chehla Bandi community. Little did she know that when her 15-year-old son left for school on October 8th 2005, she would never see him alive again. His dead body was retrieved from under the school building rubble a few days later. Similar was the fate of her husband, as



he took his cattle to graze, a two-storey lodging collapsed on him and his fellow herders. They all died on the spot. Shukrina Bibi, is left with four daughters. Her eldest thirteen year old daughter was

also at school and suffered an ear injury and a broken arm. Realizing the importance of education Shukrina Bibi sends two of her daughters to school. Although deep down in her heart the fear of the quake still lingers when she sees them off to school. All she lives for are her daughters.

In order to support her family, Shukrina offers domestic services to the more affluent. Though her daughters' education it takes up a considerable portion of the family income, a mere Rs. 4,500/, but this does not deter her from continuing. The family lives under a tin roof, which is surrounded by plastic sheets, serving as walls, donated by international organizations. With remorseful tears she states, that the government turned a blind eye to the suffering masses in these areas. Besides housing, there are other problems to address. Another substantial portion of the income is spent on groceries. The price hike after the earthquake is unimaginable, it has only added to the plight of the survivors.

Today Shukrina walks around the community looking for more work in order to eke out a slightly better life for her children. Despite having suffered this severe shock in her life, she continues with an incredible optimism for a bright future for her daughters. HOPE is providing a "ray of Hope" for many like Shukrina Bibi.

ARSLA JAWAID

LIFESTYLE

Lifestyles of different communities vary from flamboyant or simple, luxurious or Spartan, this variability is attributed to class, geographical location, level of education etc. The people of AJK have lived simply for generations, independent of the many luxuries without which life is usually unimaginable. They are self-sufficient, rarely needing to venture on to the plains. They make do without high fashion and packaged goods, living life 'au-naturel'.

This tranquil existence was brought to a shattering halt in October 2005. The earth split open with a mighty roar and swallowed the once majestic mountains, leaving piles of rubble in its wake. The houses of the residents of AJK were completely destroyed; they had no place to live and were forced to leave the once familiar land, which was now transformed into unfamiliar and threatening territory, in search of food and warmth.

The earthquake had left the land unsuitable for agriculture, which previously had been the mountain-dwellers' main source of income. Nearly all the affected families were left without a livelihood and a means of sustenance. Many resorted to a life of petty crime in order to feed their hungry children. Those who preferred to earn an honest living chose to take part in the massive reconstruction campaign in order to survive. The earthquake killed many male breadwinners therefore the bereaved widows were forced to venture out of their homes in search of livelihoods. This was not easy for them, as they faced harassment from society for "abandoning" their families. What's more, many women were cheated by their employers and were paid far less than men for the same job.

The Government has attempted to provide compensations to the bereaved families, in an attempt to allow them to lead somewhat normal lives again. Each affected family has received compensation to reconstruct their houses. Unfortunately, the money allotted is not enough to re-establish all that they had. Moreover many people are afraid to spend money on something so concrete, as they fear future calamities. Instead of investing their money or using it to reconstruct, most victims prefer to spend the money on daily essentials and making ends meet while they continue to live in tent-cities.

The earthquake has strengthened the faith in God of these staunch Muslims. They consider this earthquake, not as a punishment from God but maintain that it was merely a test of faith and that they will be rewarded for their fortitude in the hereafter.

Anusha Asif
Aamina Siddiqi

Relief Efforts to Combat the Catastrophe!

The powerful Earthquake on 8th October 2005 at 8:50 am, measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale that struck Pakistan was probably the worst natural disaster that hit the region in decades. As a result thousands were killed and injured and millions left homeless. One of the great tragedies of the earthquake was the destruction to public buildings like health clinics and schools. Many children were killed and injured when their schools collapsed. Thousands were trapped under the rubble of their collapsed homes. A multitude of people were caught sleeping after their pre-dawn meal, as it was the holy month of Ramadan, and were unable to run out to safer ground. The entire nation wholeheartedly rose to the occasion to provide whatever help they could, whether on a communal basis or individually. The Government provided valuable aid to the earthquake victims. Army helicopters were deputed to rescue trapped victims and provide shelters, blankets, medicines and edibles to the survivors. Later they distributed compensations for the victims whose houses had been reduced to rubble. This aid continues in certain areas even today. The Pakistani Government also sent doctors door to door, opened hospitals, repaired BHU's (Basic Health Unit) and RHC's (Rural Health Centre). Help was also extended in the assistance of rebuilding schools that had collapsed. Special programs were aired encouraging people to donate as much as they could. The media helped in their own way by announcements on the radio and T.V about missing people.



Enthusiastic citizens and the local public of Pakistan relentlessly participated in the relief efforts, they donated large amount of funds, items for daily use and basic necessities of life helping to keep the spirit alive. The Kashmiris were especially indebted to the people of Karachi for their overwhelming efforts which helped them survive the severe cold. The rest of the country also provided commendable support to the earthquake victims.

Many Private agencies also contributed to these relief efforts, providing funds and aid to help the victims. Several organizations worldwide also played a large role in providing help to the affected people. UNICEF, in collaboration with HOPE NGO introduced a new product, UNIMIX, for malnourished children under five, pregnant and lactating women. This product was distributed in all the villages and districts, free of cost. People were called to the BHU's and RHC's for check up's and given medicines and UNIMIX. World Food Program has been functioning efficiently in Kashmir, focusing on the health of all age groups. A Turkish NGO, which has provided the



Kashmiri people with tents, food, has also built a hospital, distributed medicines and sent specialized doctors. The Korean NGO works tirelessly in Kashmir to help the victims survive the harsh living conditions. Despite all the efforts and donations in general, yet it is the people themselves living in the affected areas whose stoic fortitude has seen them through the worst. Keeping hope kindled within themselves they strive towards a better future!

MaheenAsad
Amtul Haseen Baweja

Never Ending Hardships for Tasneem Begum

Widowed during the calamitous earthquake, Tasneem Begum now works as a laundry supervisor at the CDRS headquarters in Badangi. With eight children to support, she and her family live hand to mouth on her meager earnings of Rs. 4000/month.



Her wages must cover the house rent too. Yet this spirited lady is determined not to compromise on the education of her children. She is among the unfortunate people who did not receive any monetary compensation from the government. Her husband had a few savings which were quickly exhausted on food supplies within a year. To add to this, her aging father's poor health takes a large portion of her income. Tasneem Begum's mental anguish is also borne out of losing 14 other family members to the terrible disaster. Yet, she considers herself blessed because she has a reliable job, a rarity in an area ridden with adversity and despair.

Amtul Haseen
Shyaan Hassan
Maheen Asad

Loved Ones Lost



The destruction wrought by the October 8th earthquake took away a great deal with it; families, friends, houses, buildings, hopes, dreams, in fact, almost everything. Walking around Chela and talking to the residents, listening to their heart wrenching stories, I thought I had understood the real meaning of the word 'tragedy'. I was wrong! The story of Bibi Kureishia and Gul Zaman taught me that sometimes misfortune knows no bounds.

The couple had 3 children, Rubina 13, Faiza 12, and Mohsin 10. October 8th '05 saw the ruin of this happy family. Tragically both girls lost their lives when the school building collapsed over them. The parents lived to tell the tale, but in essence, they were dead. Their son escaped death, being physically handicapped he does not attend school, therefore he was spared the fate of his sisters.

The trauma suffered by the parents due to the deaths of their daughters, resulted in the loss of their mental stability. Though Gul Zaman manages to maintain his job as a mason, the couple lives in the past, a time when their universe was still intact.

Gul Zaman and Bibi Kureishia shared a large house with three other families. When the house collapsed, only one of the families received compensation. Bibi Kureishia and Gul Zaman, with their deteriorating mental health were unable to fight for their dues; they so desperately needed for the care of Mohsin. Furthermore, the authorities compensated them for the loss of only one daughter. The collapsed walls of their two rooms have now been crudely replaced by sheets, since they lack resources for a more stable structure.

The aftermath of the earthquake has been equally unkind. Despite the deep mental scarring that has left Gul Zaman and Bibi Kureishia unable to face the bleak future, they are somehow trying to continue their lives. It seems very doubtful that this couple will ever be able to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. HOPE as well as other NGO's are working to provide some stability to such families.

Ghazal Asif

Remorseful Reminiscences from Chehla

Reflecting on his memories of the 8th of October 2005, Mohammad Sharif recalls ruefully the fact that he wasn't there for his wife and seven children on the day they needed him the most. He was away from his village when the earthquake struck, rushing back as soon as he could, only to discover that he had lost his wife and a 4 year old daughter in the catastrophic earthquake. He recalls walking around in a daze, wondering why tragedy had befallen his family and snatched away the dearest from him. He drew strength from the realization that he was the only person who could give his children the support they needed after losing their mother. He remembers how he went about in search of aid on the first few days following the earthquake. Yet to receive his share of compensation from the government, his faith in Allah is strong and he knows that it will guide him through troubled times ahead.



Young Mukhtiar Hussain was resting in the mosque after the dawn prayers when the rumbling earth shook everything for miles, as a result the mosque caved in, leaving him buried under the rubble. He considers himself extremely fortunate to have escaped any major injury, even though he wasn't rescued until a couple of hours later.

Both Mohammad Sharif and Mukhtiar Hussain believe that the only hope the people have of overcoming their losses and rehabilitating themselves is to restore their trust in each other and move on together.

Shayaan Hassan

Picking up the Pieces

A young and energetic 13 year old teenager, Shafeeq was studying at school when the earth began to shake violently beneath his feet. Reacting instantly, he rushed out of

his school building and managed to save his life. Outside, he looked behind him, and saw his school collapsing, the walls crumbling to the ground. Hearing the sounds of other children screaming and pleading for help, he did not think twice and ran right back inside to help them.



That day, brave Shafeeq saved the lives of two of his friends. Returning home he found his house empty - his mother and sister were nowhere to be found. His father was in another village that day. Overcome with fear, he anticipated the worst and went out in search for them, only to learn that they had been killed when they went to the market to buy the daily essentials. Lonely, lost and overcome with grief, he somehow managed to find his way back home. He found his other siblings curled up together in fear of the days happenings

Shafeeq lives in the gnawing agony of having lost his mother and little sister. Bit by bit, he is trying hard to rebuild a life for himself and his siblings. The memories of that fateful day still haunt him. There seems to be no hope of alleviation for the families that live hand to mouth, as aid is scarce. This 15 year old boy has lost the sparkle in his eyes. He has lost hope of fulfilling the dream he once had of becoming a successful doctor. Helping kids like Shafeeq is one of the priorities of HOPE.

Shayaan Hassan

Tragedy befalls Naseem Bibi.

Naseem Bibi, a resident of Bela, had waved goodbye to her youngest daughter, who attends the local school nearby and her college going son, before continuing with her daily chores on the fateful morning of 8th October.

The domestic animals outside Naseem Bibi's house were restless as



she fed them their morning fodder. Their restlessness changed into panic for their owner as the earth began to tremble violently and dwellings began collapsing around her. Recovering from her stupor she hurried

towards her home to rescue her family. She whisked her elder daughters and her aging father out of the house. Unfortunately her husband was trapped under the rubble of the collapsed house. Being rescued after four hours, she discovered he had broken his hipbone and both his legs. Meanwhile the youngest daughter was severely injured due to the collapsing school building.

Bela is a village located at a considerable distance from the city, with a river flowing between the two. Following the earthquake, three days lapsed before any kind of aid could reach the inhabitants of this village. Much to their relief the Army arrived with food items, and a few days later a team of Turkish doctors accessed the remote village to alleviate the sufferings of the injured.

The surgery performed on her husband was not successful and left him paralyzed. An operation costing Rs. 3 lakhs is required to treat him, but he refuses to have it done. He asserts that he is old and it is pointless wasting money on his treatment. Rather he would prefer if the compensation amount is spent on the education of his children.

Searching For Hope Phir Se Bassay Ga Muzaffarabad

*Bari museebat mein aaj meray azeez phassaay huay hain
Koi tarapta lahoon lahaan hai, koi makaan ke talay dabba hai
Suboot dena hai aaj mujh ko magar ajab kashmakash mein hoon
Ke pehley kis ki taraf mai jaaoon, kisay talaashoon, kissay bachaoon*



October 8th 2005, was the day that the world saw the Northern Areas of Pakistan struck by a devastating earthquake. Muzaffarabad, previously known as the city of love with heavenly peace and beauty was reduced to a pile of rubble in the blink of an eye, with the loss of valuable lives of our dear countrymen.

*“Maut karti hai aaj rasm yahan, muskurata thha kal jahan ek sheher”
“Meray aankhon se who manzar nahee jaata, nikal aati hain bochhal se bach kar. Magar meray dil se abhi tak darr nahee jaata”*

The earthquake brought a shocking change to the lives of the survivors and each one had a heart-wrenching story to tell. Sehrish Gulzar narrates:
“I lived in the Upper Planes of Muzaffarabad. My family comprised of my mom, a brother, two sisters, my grandfather and a niece. My small family was living a happy contented life till all of a sudden on the fateful day when the clock struck 8:52 am, the earthquake shattered our calm. We were all busy in our household chores when all of a sudden the violent tremors turned our home and many others into a pile of rubble. It was a dark moment in the history of my village. Life seized to exist in this region. We were helpless in this hour of crisis.

The roof of the house fell over me. My heart was pounding as I was wedged between the rice scattered on the floor and the ceiling. My family too, was trapped under the rubble of the two-storey building. I was unable to see anything but I heard mother's faint voice reciting the kalma and my sister taking deep breaths, but there was no sound from my frail and aging grandfather. I was calling out to my mother, her voice stopped abruptly. My frantic cries for help became louder so that someone would come and rescue us from our despair.

After some time I could hear a few voices very close. I identified my uncle's and cousin's voices. After digging for an hour using their bare hands owing to the lack of tools they were able to rescue me. I clinched my uncle and wept. There was no time to waste. We hurried on to rescue my mother and the others. Our efforts were in vain. It seemed unreal that that she had gone into eternal slumber. Finally we were able to pull out her body from under the debris; I was unable to gather the strength to look at her, I cannot express my feelings when I first glimpsed at her. She was no more.

With a heavy heart I turned my attention to my grandfather; he too had succumbed to his fate. Luckily, Javed, my younger brother escaped death but was seriously wounded.

Hysterically I ran towards the school site to search for my sister and niece. After two hours of relentless digging my sister was pulled out of the school rubble alive, in a critical condition, but my niece did not have the same luck.

I burst into tears while I embraced my brother and sister. They were all I had left! I will never forget the scene when my dear ones were being lowered into their graves.

“Utaar aayi hoon un ko qabr mein, lekin meray kandhay se un ka sar nahee jaata.”

It seems unbelievable that it was just at sehri time that I was talking to my mother; there were many things, left unsaid. I wonder what the thoughts of my dear ones were in their helplessness. 8th October snatched everything away from us. Passing by my village, brings back memories of my childhood and the good times I spent with my family. The loss of my beloved ones is irreparable but life has to go on and we have to take care of those who survived this tragedy.”

*‘Phir se aabaad ho ga apna nagar, phir se aabaad ho ga apna nagar
Laut aaye gi phir bahaaraan yahan
Muskurayen ge phir sab hee chehray,
Quetta basa thha, muzaffarabad bhee basay ga’*

Rafia Yakooob

The Slumber of Death in Chehla

Like every other housewife, Shahnoor Bibi was going about her regular morning routine on 8th October 2005. She was sweeping the floor in the area outside her home when everything around her began to shake violently.

The sight of the pile of rubble, that only a few minutes ago had been her home, pierced her heart like a knife. Her panic gave way to hysterical screams as it dawned on her that she had lost her sons, Irfan 3 and Khurram 6, who had been playing indoors.

She was so overwhelmed by her agony and grief that it wasn't until her sons' bodies were recovered after a few hours that she worried about her other children who had not yet returned from school. To add to her misfortune, sadly she had lost them too.

The sum of money she received from the Government as compensation for her losses was not enough to allow her to reconstruct her house, provide for her family, or bring her life back to even a shadow of what it had been before the dreadful earthquake struck.

Today, she would be very glad to leave her homeland for some respite from the skyrocketing prices which have added to her desolation. Even though she has rebuilt the physical structure of her home, it is merely a shell, devoid of the warmth it previously gave to its inhabitants. Shahnoor Bibi does not have the courage to stay here any more; memories of her happy life continue to haunt her.

Her greatest fear is that the worst isn't over yet; this could happen again and everything she's worked so hard for could be wiped out in a flash. She wonders why she should think about a future without her family, for whom she had cherished many dreams. Nature has become a threat to her and all those residing in the area. The slightest tremors or even the sight and sound of dark clouds rolling in, makes her cower in fearful anticipation of what calamity may strike the area next.

Shayan Hassan



Harrowing memories for Nadia

In the village of Bela, 8 year old little Nadia and her classmates were stunned when the earth began to shake violently under their tiny feet. They remained rooted to their chairs, thinking it could only be a nightmare;

it wasn't until Nadia was jolted by her teacher that she realized what was happening was real. No sooner were the frightened girls rushed out of the premises that the school came crumbling down. The horror of the day wasn't over yet.



When she made it back home, she learnt that her one year old baby sister had been crushed to death when their small home collapsed.

Visions of that terrifying morning are vivid in her mind even today, she has lost all courage and the slightest tremor, or a drop of rainfall, sends Nadia hurrying out under the open sky. At times, when she plays with her younger siblings, she is overcome with emotion as she remembers the sister she lost. There seems to be no end to the emotional suffering this child has been subjected to. She and countless others like her desperately need our help to rise above the traumatic experiences of their childhood.

Shyaan Hassan

Visit to the RHC--Chikaar

Two and a half hours from the city of Muzaffarabad, driving along the rocky terrain, we reached the small, remote district of Chikar. The district was set up by the government and now, UNICEF in collaboration with HOPE is providing rehabilitation assistance to its residents. The previously well set-up office of the RHC was completely razed to the ground following the catastrophic disaster of 8th October 2005. The RHC is now housed in make-shift mobiles to continue its noble work. The SSM of the Chikaar clinic Mr. Raja Abrar and the LHV Naheed Akhter work diligently for the welfare of the locals.



The RHC is at present focusing on a nutrition project called the 'UNIMIX Project' which has been initiated by UNICEF in collaboration with HOPE NGO. Malnourished children under the age of 5 are the beneficiaries of this campaign. Trained personnel check these children using special equipment, taking into consideration their weight and height before putting them on a diet which includes this nutritive powder.

Amtul Haseen
Shayaan Hassan
Maheen Asad



Adopt a Child

Children studying in HOPE School belong to the low socio - economic class. These children cannot afford to go to school and would otherwise be playing on the street.

HOPE has started a scheme of ADOPT A CHILD whereby the educational needs of a child for one year can be looked after by a volunteer donor. This includes the education expenses of the child including books, uniform, stationeries, shoes etc. The amount for adopting a primary school child is Rs. 2500 per year while the amount for adopting a secondary or high school child is Rs. 4000 per year. By donating this amount you can contribute to providing one full year of education for a child. The progress of the child is shared with the donor who has adopted the child.

Adopt a TB Patient

HOPE is running a TB clinic for tuberculosis patients in Thatta, where tuberculosis drugs are provided to TB patients from the villages around Thatta. The treatment cost of one TB patient is Rs. 500 per month. The total duration of the treatment is eight months. Hence, the total treatment cost of one TB patient is 4000 per annum. It is requested that people should come forward and adopt TB patients so that a large number of TB patients can be provided TB medicines free of cost.



Muzaffarabad Tour Interiors



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YOU CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE.....

Your contribution can help educate a child and help make a family healthy

HOW!

- For just Rs. 3500 educate a child via formal school and support his health for one year.
- For Rs. 2500 educate a child via informal home schools for a year.
- For just Rs. 4000 educate an older child in secondary and high school for one year.
- For Rs. 5000 adopt a hospital bed for one month.
- For Rs. 27,500 adopt an informal school for a year.
- For only Rs. 4000 adopt a TB patient for its complete treatment.
- Help with investigation and treatment of poor and needy patients - as much as you can afford.
- Hospital equipment required

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