



GRACE ASSOCIATION · PAKISTAN
THE GRASSROOTS' ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2009

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Swat
SOS



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The Voice of Grassroots GRACE Newsletter # 01/2009

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EDITORIAL



Readers,

“The Voice of Grassroots” is GRACE’s biannual Newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to promote and highlight grassroots community issues and seek sustainable solution through advocacy, linkage development, and partnerships. It provides a platform of communication between grassroots communities, community based organizations, NGOs, Online Volunteers, Researchers, Development Practitioners, and Government Executives; and facilitates the sharing of indigenous knowledge and information around the globe.

In this issue, we have attempted to enclose various social aspects and burning issues of the society in one newsletter. While analyzing the issue, you will find not only contemporary social issues and crises, but also GRACE activities and events, inspirational success stories and funding opportunities for grassroots organization.

Our Editorial Board welcomes articles and news from other organizations as well. Volunteers can publish and disseminate the newsletter through emails and hard copies among donors, writers and indigenous communities at grassroots level.

Because any experience and lesson is valuable, especially for communities in the least developed parts of the country, where the voice of the lower middle and grassroots level are to be up for their development. We encourage you to share your expertise with us. Thank you.

Sehrish Rashid
Senior Editor
Voice of Grassroots Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Voice for Social Justice and Democracy



As a social worker, I have always had a fruitful relationship with the communities I belong, but now together me and my organization, are embarking upon an important

collaboration that will benefit communities in large both institutional and individual level.

In this issue, you will read all about how our actions are having an impact on the communities we serve, even with our little and limited resources. Also, that how much is it important to bring a change for poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups in the development process. I hope, this effort will help advancing our mission and provide tremendous opportunities for communities looking for their development in frustration.

Achieving excellence requires the participation of all stakeholders concerned to GRACE Association. So we

are thrilled to have our goals exceeded with boosting participation of the communities we serve as well as the talents imported to us through online available services. I would avail this opportunity to thank the UNV Online Volunteering Services for collaborating with GRACE, providing so many volunteers around the globe eager to help communities in anyway.

We are also delighted to incorporate many burning issues in this newsletter, which need immediate consideration. We are passionately committed in handling the root causes of poverty, environmental degradation, conflicts, social and economic imbalances and exclusions, by providing practical solutions that, when accepted in good faith and translated into positive actions; build on authentic growth, social transformation, justice and sustainable development.

To achieve these outcomes, we will continue to collaborate with initiatives at different levels to strategize and develop a culture in which we share and apply our best practices and aspirations.

As the air finally turns crisp and cool, I extend my wishes that may your days begin with peace and you serve the humanity anywhere in any manner.

Shamshad Hussain
Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT GRACE



The Grassroots Association for Community Empowerment (GRACE Association Pakistan) is a non government and non profit organization (NPO) registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of

Pakistan (SECP) under section 42 of the Companies' Ordinance 1984. The organization has developed into a regionally and nationally recognized, independently governed sustainable institution from a grassroots initiative taken almost one and half decade ago as a seven children's grassroots campaign for female education. Areas of interventions have flourished from education and health to agriculture, environment, natural resource management, ecotourism, water and sanitation, humanitarian assistance and livelihood. The overall strategic framework of the organization is anchored in the concept of sustainable development, enhanced outreach to the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups and communities and replication of best practices.

GRACE Vision

GRACE's efforts contribute to a world which recognizes, respects, and values the socioeconomic, political, legal and environmental aspirations of marginalized and vulnerable communities particularly women and children on equality basis to promote a sustainable, equitable prosperous and peaceful society.

GRACE Mission

GRACE Association endeavors to empower and improve the quality of life of the marginalized and vulnerable communities through welfare, participatory research and development, capacity building, promotion of best practices and partnership building, advocacy, and by launching sustainable and replicable innovative projects.

GRACE Values, Strategic Principles, Interventions and Objective

GRACE has adopted two core values including Social justice & Equity (rights, vulnerability, and access) and Democracy (Participation, transparency, accountability, rules and regulations) for its institutional norms and programmatic operations. Its programs are run through the strategic principles of social mobilization, volunteerism, advocacy, human rights, partnership building and networking.

The conceptual designs and the implementation framework of all the programs and projects follows a set of strategic interventions including; education and awareness, human & institutional development (HID), equitable community development, participatory planning and implementation, gender and diversity empowerment and local resource mobilization. All endeavors are steered to achieve the following objectives:

- Promotion of quality education, early childhood care and development and inclusive education.
- Building and strengthening human & institutional development through training, skills enhancement and education etc.
- Enhancing the access of marginalized and deprived communities particularly of least developed parts of the country to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, education, health, prevention of HIV/AIDs and economic development opportunities.
- Mainstreaming of most marginalized, extremely vulnerable and socially excluded groups and populations like peoples with disabilities in development
- Undertaking initiatives for the reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the displaced populations affected by disasters.

Khadim Hussain

SWAT CALAMITY APPEAL!

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Pakistan need Our Help

As military operation continues in Swat, Dir, Buner and adjacent locations, the residents of these areas are migrating to safer regions like Mardan, Charsadda and Peshawar in bulk. More than 2 million people displaced from their places of residence. The Swat Calamity is now termed as largest humanitarian catastrophe of recent times. Those Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) imperatively need our help.

This tragedy is calling for help to all individuals, organizations, charities and NGOs in general and nationals of Pakistan in particular, to come forward and help by extending financial, technical and moral support to hundreds of thousands, feared to be displaced in Swat Calamity. If nothing else can be done, you can still spread the word.

How you can help

Besides sending cash to charity organizations working in the area, you can also support by providing following commodities. Please do not donate old/expired stuff. Make sure edible items are hygienic and properly packed.

The Volunteers of Grace Association Pakistan are ready to serve the cause by fetching the commodities to real deserving and suffering in camps to IDPs in absolute needs.

- Clothing: Clothes of various sizes, Beddings, Shoes
- Food: Rice, Sugar, Flour (Atta), Onions, Potatoes, Cooking oil, Tea, Milk (tetra packs or powder), Safe drinking water, Cooked Food
- Medical kits: IV cannulas, IV Drip sets, IV drips: normal saline, ringer lactate, Local anesthetics (injections), Cotton bandages, cotton.

- Medicines: Water purification tablets, Life saving drugs, Vaccines for malaria, cholera, typhoid, influenza. Pain killers including strong ones like morphine derivatives, tremadol, pethadine, kinz. Antibiotics like tetnus, amoxil, and entamycin.
- Other: Suturing materials, Skin staples.
- Surgical instruments: Needle holders, forceps, and tweezers etc.
- Toiletries: Tissues, Soaps, Dettol (antibacterial cleaners), Towels
- Utensils: Jerri cans (large plastic cans that hold 20 liters of water or other liquids), Crockery, Buck, etc.

If you intend to help through money, the following amounts cover:

- \$70: Provides 20 wool blankets to protect refugees from the cold.
- \$90: Provides a survival kit to a refugee family, with essentials such as blankets, cooking and heating stove.
- \$180: Provides an all-season tent to shelter a family of 5.
- \$450: Sinks two wells to provide clean water for refugees.
- \$1,100: Provides a therapeutic feeding kit to feed 100 children.

Where to Contact

Grace Association Pakistan

Account Number: 1321

Bank Name: MCB Bank Limited

Bank Address: Abpara Market Branch 0597, Hameed Chamber, Islamabad.

Bank Telegraphic Address: MUSCAP BANK

Please feel free to donate other organizations involved in relief activities as well. Thank you!



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ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

GRACE celebrated World Disability Day



It is estimated that there are almost 610 million people living with disabilities across the world. Out of those, 40 million are in Pakistan. In Baltistan, the ratio of such people is 11% among 0.5 million population.

The 'International Day of Disabled Persons' serves as a reminder for organizations in order to help improving the conditions for disabled, to muster world-wide assistance and support and to champion the rights of people living with disabilities. GRACE Association Pakistan organized a small but purposeful conference at GRACE Program Office Skardu FANA in this regard on December 3rd, 2008.

GRACE Disability and Rehabilitation Coordinator and other Speakers at the occasion sought to raise the awareness on the rights of people suffering disabilities. The objective of the program was to

explore better ways of accessing information and communication facilities that are as much a right to the disabled, as it is to the rest of the population and sensitize community people and caregivers, media and government to help the disabled creating friendly environment with in homes, schools and in the society.

GRACE seeks Government of Japan's assistance for Women's Social Empowerment



It is a fact that water is life and also a fundamental human right. Unavailability of clean water is not only associated with drinking problems but also with other domestic uses including cooking, and health and hygiene issues.

The availability of sufficient clean water is the most crucial and burning issue in Astana, the suburb of Skardu Main Town. Most of the displaced population living in Astana does not have access to clean water which adversely affects the women and children.

They are deprived of tap water and compelled to use open water through storage wells, which leads to various diseases increasing not only the health expenditures but also resulting into reduced working days for them.

The children have to spend at least 5 – 6 hours so as to bring water from the source which is also one of the major reasons of poor enrollment of girls in the school. Government and any other development agency has so far not drawn its attention to address the issue therefore, it has become our main focus as compared to other alternatives and issues.

GRACE Association is seeking assistance from the Grassroots Grant Program (GGP) Government of Japan Embassy Islamabad for Women's Social Empowerment through clean drinking water supply to the displaced population as well as indigenous communities in this village. This project would bring a quick change in the lives of this displaced population by reducing the burden of diseases, morbidity, health expenditures and by increasing the number of working days. It would also relieve pressure on the girls and they would have sufficient time to be enrolled in the school and be literate.



It is a fact that water is life and also a fundamental human right. The Astana village in Skardu, where most of displaced people live, is in dire need of clean water.



GRACE requests British Council and Care International to help ECD Program



Isolated and remote regions of the Himalayas and Karakorum Mountains contain over 90% of its children growing without proper care and education. The inaccessible regions such as Kwardu, Astana, and Sukkamaidan located in Baltistan, Pakistan are easily and undeservingly forgotten. Statistics show enrolment in pre-school is barely 2 percent for boys and almost 0 percent for girls. Unfortunately, parents of these children are also illiterate and don't pay much attention to their children's education either. Therefore, GRACE began an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD) pilot project that reaches many villages of Baltistan.

GRACE is requesting the prominent donors including British Council Pakistan and Care International to help out communities investing on development of future generations in these remote

regions. GRACE ECDE Program aims to build knowledge and skills of parents, caregivers, community volunteers, and primary school teachers in the backward and far flung villages of Ganche, Chilas, Astore and Skardu Districts of Northern Areas (Gilgit, Baltistan) Pakistan.

GRACE PPAF dialogue for Community Empowerment



Baltistan is the remotest part of the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) Pakistan. Inaccessibility, poor communication and isolation have collectively rendered the communities of the region to live in ancient ages with an outdated life style. More than 70% of the population resides in rural areas and is still deprived of large number of socio-economic development infrastructure and facilities.

These communities directly or indirectly eke out their livelihoods from the natural resources including land, water, forests and range-

lands etc with the larger dependence on subsistence agriculture and livestock farming. Resource scarcity and poor employment opportunities negatively affect their quality of life and many more are compelled to live in extreme poverty.

The social sector indicators are very low compared to other regions of Northern Areas. The literacy rate is approximately 33% for males and 12% for females. Except Skardu town, the entire region is characterized with lack of access to better health, education, water and sanitation and infrastructure services.

The Union Council Kawadu which lies in Tehsil Skardu – 2 is a rugged mountainous valley representing an epitome of dry piece of land across the Mighty Indus is the one that has been facing severity of resource shortage since history. The population of the valley is almost 22000. 12% of the male population is employed in government departments and Pak Army implying that only 12% of the population has access to cash economy. The rest of the 88% fully depend on subsistence farming including livestock rearing.

The pressure on the existing meager useable resources is increas-

ing by every passing day. Natural pastures and vegetation that are one of the major sources for livestock food are diminishing at a very high pace giving rise to decreasing trend of livestock farming. This is taking place due to the lack of conservation practices above the channel for proper management of the pastures and supply of animal food for eight months of the year.

Agriculture expansion to grow fodder for animals has little potential in the prevailing water shortage. In the recent past before the degradation of the "traditional management system", there were rules and regulations regarding the transportation of animals to the pastures, managing rotational grazing and bringing the herd back to the villages. The system did not sustain because on one hand, the political interventions abolished the traditional system, and on the other hand, due to the shortage of human resources/labor for instance increased enrollment of children in schools, and temporary migration of youth and elders to nearby towns and to other parts of the country for employment. Women cannot manage the livestock on pastures and also face problems in providing them sufficient food during all seasons. In the face of these issues and

being the local grassroots association, GRACE conceived the dire need to introduce a system of integrated resource and environmental management through social mobilization and community organization with the incentive of poverty reduction through increased monetary benefits from the existing production resources. GRACE is seeking partnership with Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund for community based collective enterprise development projects underpinning business plans for local economy development.

Project concept emphasizes on the introduction and establishment of collective and sustainable management of livestock premised on market-oriented demand based production systems which will lead to increased production, enhanced productivity and marketing, consequently, increasing the income of the farmers, reduce poverty and raise their quality of life. The concept has been developed keeping in view the local cultural and socio-economic norms and conditions of the indigenous communities.

PPAF's partnership will enable GRACE to introduce a systemic method of livestock farming that ensures better management and improved production at a large scale vis-à-vis establishing a

system of controlled/rotational livestock grazing in the highland as well as in the low land pastures that would safeguard the rehabilitation of the environment and ecosystem through a conservation approach. This again would be a model system that does not exist in the region.

CEO GRACE meets Secretary Ministry of Special Education Islamabad



One of the GRACE prime objectives is to empower people with disabilities through education. Therefore, the organization is endeavoring to provide inclusive education, assistive devices and skill training as long term livelihood support to PWDs in the Northern Areas. The needs for these services have been identified through a series of participatory planning events held by the organization with representatives of the communities involved.

GRACE also conducted a survey of 20 Government and Community

// GRACE thrives to empower people through education: especially women and the disabled. //

Primary Schools in District Skardu few months ago to assess the existing situation of these schools and find out barriers in mainstreaming children with disabilities in these existing Government and Community Schools.

Mr. Shamshad Hussain CEO GRACE met Mr. G.M Sikandar Shigri, Secretary Ministry of Special Education Islamabad with the analysis of the survey findings and a project document to promote inclusive education in Skardu as well as in other Districts of Gilgit Baltistan.

The honorable Secretary appreciated GRACE efforts and recommended the project. Later on GRACE also had a meeting with the Deputy Director Inclusive Education in the Ministry and discussed on the project. But yet process and approval is awaited.

Ms. Joanna Wyzlitz UN Online Volunteer visits GRACE Office Islamabad

Ms. Joanna Wyzlitz from Bonn Germany had been collaborated with GRACE through UN Online Volunteer services during June – August 2007 in review of a document and linkage development with an organization in Pakistan in disability sector. GRACE found her



Joanna Wyzlitz

a sincere and committed consultant during the collaboration.

Later on she came to Pakistan and was living in Islamabad working as a consultant with GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation. She visited GRACE Islamabad Office on February 16, 2009 and was very happy with GRACE progress and achievements. She thanked GRACE for helping to get her visa extension and showed interest to work with GRACE at any project in future.

GRACE Public School inaugurated

Responding to the pressing need of the Northern Pakistan communities of the Baltistan area of giving children access to education, GRACE Association Pakistan, together with its partners, has built a new public school in Skardu and proudly inaugurated it last April 2009.

The School is located at the centre of the Astana village in Northern Pakistan, on the Main Airport Road, surrounded by a beautiful green landscape, rich with fruit trees. The distance from the Skardu Airport to school is 8 kms and 4 from the school to Skardu. The school began in





We are proud of being teachers of this unique school that is educating our new generation



2007, in a rented old home. However, an earthquake-proof and barriers-free school building was a burning need of time. It was necessary to promote education not only for girls but also for children with disabilities, dropouts, and children belonging to 13,000 displaced populations that had settled in Astana and its surroundings after the India-Pakistan Wars of 1965, 1971

and 1999. Furthermore, it was also essential to strengthen community cohesiveness.

GRACE Association Pakistan was successful in acting upon the objectives of the school. It now proudly presents this report after the successful completion of the building. The project was possible thanks to a partnership with the Himalayan Green Club NPO, through an invaluable grant donated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

The newly constructed GRACE Public School building was inaugurated on March 4, 2009 by the Deputy Commissioner of the Skardu District, Mr. Asif Bilal Lodhi and Mrs. Takashi San.

At the occasion, Mrs. Kawasaki San, Mr. Nakaoka San and Mr. Masuda San, Assistant Directors of the Himalayan Green Club of Japan, also represented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

GRACE Association Pakistan organized a vibrant inauguration ceremony. Present at the event were also heads of district line departments, member of civil society organizations, social development workers, teachers, women councilors and women of the village and communities from surrounding areas participated in large numbers.

Ms. Anila Bano, Vice Principal, presented the school's academic program and highlighted the need of equitable policies to accommodate and educate all children by addressing children's marginalization, discrimination and exclusions from society. Her speech narrated, "We are proud of being teachers of this unique and dynamic school that's educating our new generation. And I would like to thank our Japanese friends and the management of GRACE Public School for creating this learning-friendly, inclusive environment. We are now able to deliver our services more effectively".

Mr. Khadim Hussain, founder of GRACE Association Pakistan, welcomed and thanked the ceremony's main guests including Mr. Asif Bilal Lodhi, Deputy Commissioner of the Skardu District, Mrs. Takashi San and all other distinguished participants on their enthusiastic involvement in the program. He also thanked the government of Japan, the people of Japan and the Himalayan Green Club for their keen interest in the development and education of grassroots in the backward region of Baltistan Northern Areas.

Wazir Ghulam Abbas, GRACE Association's Chairman and member of the Skardu District Council, welcomed all distinguished guests and thanked their warm participation in this inaugural ceremony. Wazir Abbas especially thanked the Japanese friends for their gift. He acknowledged this contribution as a long-term friendship, and praised the Japanese government and community's commitment to sustainable human resource development.

Madam Takashi San, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Himalayan Green Club, expressed joy at the successful completion of the school building. She excused the Ambassador of Japan and his

representatives for not being able to be present at the event. She also mentioned the Himalayan Green Club's achievements in Baltistan in promoting education, environment and vocational skills in the community. Mr. Zamin Ali interpreted Mrs. Takashi's speech in English and in Urdu.

The chief guest, Mr. Asif Bilal Lodhi, Deputy Commissioner of Skardu, thanked the government of Japan and the Himalayan Green Club for their efforts and contributions in supporting the underdeveloped region of Northern Pakistan.

He expressed gratefulness at the successful completion of the first earthquake-proof school building in the Northern Areas.

The Deputy Commissioner also appreciated Mr. Muhammad Qasim's land donation and Mr. Khadim Hussain, founder GRACE Association Pakistan, for his sincerity and commitment in developing and empowering the communities in Skardu Baltistan. He offered his full cooperation and on behalf of the government, for the school.

At the end of the ceremony the guests and all participants were served with refreshment tea at the multipurpose hall.

GRACE Public School staff arranged trip to Manthokha



GRACE Public School Staff teachers along with two Japanese friends Mr. Nakaoka and Mr. Masuda arranged a trip to Manthokha Kharmang Valley (A Beautiful Natural Resort) in Baltistan on April 18, 2009.

Other participants of the trip were Mr. Tanveer, Mr. Zamin Changezi, Imran, Mr. Kazim and Hassan.

They fully enjoyed the one day trip and returned with a plan to get the school children too at this place surrounded by mountains, high level water falls, greeneries and various tree species.

DREAM IS POWER

INSPIRING SUCCESS STORIES



Zakia Batool, Headmistress Al-Zahra School, Kwardu



**“No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you.”
Muhammad Ali Jinnah- March 10, 1944.**

Woman, all over the world, is a symbol of kindness, benevolence, purity and yet strength. The power she possesses is indispensable. But unfortunately, everyone doesn't realize it.

In our society, a woman still has to struggle a lot in order to reach her desired goal. It has been the dilemma for our country from centuries. Throughout the history, our women have endured severe difficulties whenever they tried to follow their dreams. But those who made it possible with their self-confidence, motivation and determination are the real asset for our country and also a great inspiration for others.

It is usually said that the first step to becoming something is to will it. Therefore in this issue, we present you a story of a dreamer, who didn't only dream but also turned it into reality. Despite of living in an environment where educating a girl was considered to be a sin through decades, this woman has managed to pursue her higher studies and now serving for other women by being an active social mobilizer for community based organization and organizing female

empowerment programs. She is an epitome of those successful eastern women, who take care of all their family issues along with professional activities and this is her journey to freedom.

My name is Zakia Batool. I am the Headmistress of Al-Zahra Girls School in Skardu, Pakistan. I was born on July 4, 1984 in Hando Village of Kwardu in a family of seven - three brothers and four sisters. From early childhood, I wanted to study, but remained unlucky for not having a school in my village.

It was in 1992, when three young people came to my father and discussed about schooling of girls. They told him about the newly opened “Al-Zahra Girls’ School” in the village and asked him to send me there, but he didn't agree. The news of school opening was joyous for me but still I had no nerve to ask or share anything to my family. Later, my father discussed the issue with the rest of family and everybody took it as a joke, which unconsciously made me cry out loud. My mother and Grandfather understood my feelings and declared that I will be sent to school.

April 10, 1992 was the happiest day of my life when I went to the school for the first time. It was a rented home with one teacher and few students including my

friend Marzia. But soon after the school started, many villagers began to declare my deed a sin, including Akhond, whom I received my religious education from. But my family never cared about such type of misinformation and supported me to continue. Soon I was appointed as the leader of the class.

Beside my mother and grandfather, some of the school boys were also a great source of inspiration for me. Those boys used to motivate parents in the village voluntarily to send their girls to school. Later, their timeless efforts took a platform with the establishment of Waliul Asr Students Organization (WASO). Being the senior students of school, both I and Marzia got involved in parents' motivational activities as well. After passing 5th grade, I was advised to admit in any other middle school. I told this thing to my family, but nobody at home agreed upon sending me out of village. So I and Marzia told our teachers, Sir Khadim and Sir Muhammad Ali, about our families' response. They took the matter seriously and assured continuation of our education up to grade 8th in the same school.

Soon before the 8th grade examination, I was told about my wedding arrangements with a cousin. I began to cry until my mother laughed and said, "Aye! It's a shame; all girls are supposed to get married one day". I knew that my tears were fruitless in this regard, but still I protested as I didn't want to marry during my education. So the family delayed the issue for a couple of months, but again it emerged as it was considered as a sensitive matter to keep a daughter at home when she was adult. Thus I finally got married with Nisar Hussain at the age of 15, on the condition that my education would not be interrupted. I was certainly lucky that my husband had also been a member of the WASO and was a real kind man. He supported me from the beginning with my studies and encouraged me to continue the education till graduation.

Me and Marzia then passed grade 8th from Al-Zahra School and anticipated to complete our matriculation from the same school. But the school administration excused itself due to their lack of capacity and resources for higher education. However WASO members fully supported us to continue further education from City Girls Highly School (CGHS). The problem was that, CGHS was 65 kilometers far across river. All of my family was anxious because they thought it unsecure until a proper accommodation could be found near the school, which they couldn't afford either.

Fortunately, one of my relative who worked in government health department lived near to the CGHS. He arranged living space for me at his home.

The new school was more furnished with hundreds of students and new lady teachers. I really began to like school and concentrated fully on my education. Though, I saw the most challenging period at that time. I had to deliver my first baby during the exams days. In the same month, my dearest grandfather and grand mother-in-law also passed away. The whole family was grieving but still I had to go, for examination the same day, leaving everyone in sob. But it was all worth it as I successfully passed SSC Examination with A Grade.

Soon after the matriculation, WASO asked me to join Al-Zahra Girls School as teacher. It was a day when I had my dream come true. WASO had transformed the whole environment of school and village till then.

The villagers were enjoying with clean tap water and an English Medium Co-education school was also opened in the village. So, with my husband's support, I joined Al-Zehra School. But I still dreamt to pursue my education. WASO members told me about distance learning program offered by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for Higher Secondary Studies. So that made it possible for me to continue studies from home.

Today, I am a mother of two, and completing my Bachelor of Arts (BA) with home economics and sociology at AIOU. I also help my family in domestic activities and have managed to keep a balance between my social and personal life.

All the villagers respect me as teacher and social worker. Now I have no restriction to go out of home. I have even organized women entertainment tours in the city. Today, girls of my village can also decide about their marriage themselves. In short, my village has totally changed now, which is definitely the result of education and awareness.

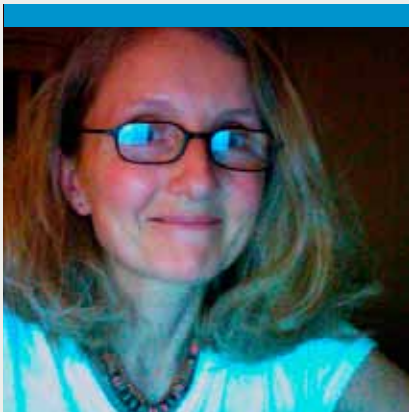
I am now an empowered woman. More than three hundred girls are getting education in my school. I think educated women can definitely change everything. I am really thankful to Allah the Almighty, my family and specially the members of Waliul Asr Students Organization (WASO) for all their efforts. And I appeal to the entire world to help communities working for education and women.

UN ONLINE VOLUNTEERS COLLABORATION STORIES



The United Nations Online Volunteers also play a great role in leading our way to success by providing their online services. Here, we present you our collaboration stories from their perspective.

Yvonne Nelson
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
BFA Graphic Design



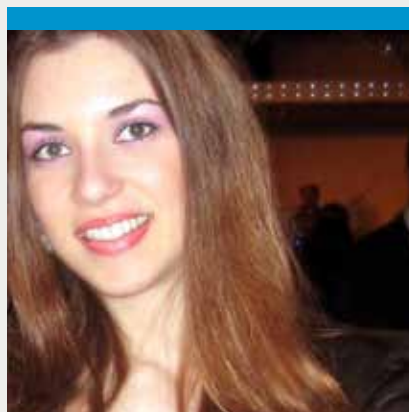
In May 2008 Yvonne Nelson, an Amsterdam-based art director and graphic designer, joined GRACE as a UN Online Volunteer applying for the assignment 'Design Layout GRACE Annual Report 2007'.

From the very beginning GRACE has found her to be a highly committed professional and a reliable volunteer; one that successfully addresses the needs of

our organization. Within her area of expertise, Yvonne has offered GRACE help in their communication efforts.

In April 2009 she again applied for a new assignment 'Edit Layout GRACE School Report' through the UNOV website, creating an attractive 12-page brochure showing the construction of a new school in Skardu, Northern Pakistan. Its overall purpose was to create awareness of GRACE's work to an international audience, specifically, supporting our funding efforts. More than eighty exchanged emails are proof of the success of this collaboration. Both GRACE and Yvonne have agreed on continuing this collaboration in the future.

Laura Reveni, Turkey
Multimedia design (Diploma)
Mediology, Faculty of Engineering (BSc)



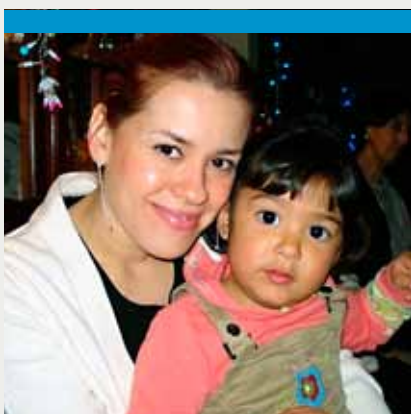
Ms Laura Riveni is one of the most committed and enthusiastic International Member of GRACE who devotedly contributes using her skills and professional expertise in all major and minor tasks. She initially joined as UNV in June 2008 but now she is working as our member. GRACE is proud to have a trustworthy and skilled online member available not only for website update tasks but also for dealing with online fundraising events as well. GRACE Association finds her as a responsible and ingenious person in all tasks she did for the organization.

Here Laura is telling her own story: I have been GRACE Online Volunteer since June 2008. While browsing through the different assignments on www.onlinevolunteering.org, GRACE Associations' assignment caught my eye as something I could work with. Having my computer education background in mind I was aware that I could use it for the technical issues of GRACE. In this way I would use my skills in my free time knowing that I would contribute to a community in need at the same time. After getting in touch with the organization's staff I started working on their website content.

My first assignment was proof reading of all the text and giving

my opinion on the design of the website. This further on continued with me getting the responsibility of updating the site with new information whenever needed. A very good collaboration is created between me and GRACE Online Volunteer Manager Khadim Hussain who updated me every now and then. I am happy to be a part of what they are doing, help in every way that I can and share experiences with them. The relationship between me and GRACE has now grown stronger and I am honored to say that the organization recognizes me as one of their online International Members.

Laura Gamboa-Cavazos
MA European Urban Cultures
POLIS, Monterrey México



Ms Laura Gamboa joined GRACE as UNV in May 2008 for the assignment to research potential organizations and donors and network Grace ECD Project with them. Since then she is helping GRACE staff in developing skills and knowledge in teaching children and young people. Most importantly, Laura is now planning to be an overseas volunteer of Grace Public School as Teacher Educator in near future. It is a transformation from online volunteering to in-person volunteering in the history of UNV's collaboration with Grace Association Pakistan. Laura Gamboa shares her own story here.

It was on May 2008 when I started my adventure with GRACE. After having my masters' degree I wanted to explore the field of international development. A friend told me about the UN Online Volunteer website so I started looking for an interesting project where I found GRACE and I was very excited because the project was dedicated to invest in different social areas. I also applied because of its dedication to children as GRACE has been working very hard to give them the magical tools to develop themselves and become admirable citizens so as to contribute to their communities and world peace.

I contributed in the task of helping network for early childhood education. I researched during three months through the internet different organizations where GRACE could establish a link and share knowledge. It was a wonderful experience doing this research because I learned a lot about child education, the variety of educational alternatives that increased my teaching skills as well.

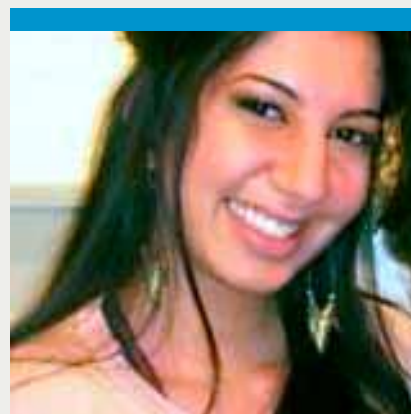
Khadim, GRACE Online Volunteer Manager, was an excellent guide and supporter for me while researching. He is an inspiration to continue working for social development, increase awareness not only in members of communities but around the world and bring more people together. He is an example of patience, discipline, hard work, responsibility but above all of passion. Participating in this project as an online volunteer was and still is a motivation for me to continue as a teacher.

GRACE Association is thus successful making contacts with some of the education networks: CRIN, GFC, NAEYC and Founda-

tion for Early Learning. GRACE School staff enriching their skills and knowledge from these internet based resources. The organization was also successful in developing linkages with few of those education networks.

My experience with GRACE was very enriching. I feel much honored that GRACE recognizes me as one of its online international member.

Aisha Mian
MBA Finance
Financial Analyst, USA



Ms Aisha Mian is one of the best online volunteer of GRACE possessing full capacity to address needs meet deadlines and contribute in her skills in the most burning areas of any assignment asked. Aisha joined GRACE and UNV in December, 2008 to help GRACE develop linkages with donors for Early Childhood Program, but Aisha is a kind of person who never gets tired of doing assignments. It is also worthy to mention that she does not works for any appreciation or certification. She has a thrust to contribute in Grace Association's endeavors to empower communities. One of her virtue is her commitment that she keeps at any cost. Here she shares her story in details.

GRACE Association has been a

pleasure to work with and as a UN online volunteer in the past months; I am honored to be able to continue to work with such an empowering program.

I began my search to help and contribute to a humanitarian organization while I was working full time and at the same time working to complete my MBA. Knowing about all the troubling worldwide issues, I felt as though there was something I could do to contribute to help developing countries and to help them progress.

Being involved with such a busy schedule, I felt as though finding an organization to help through a form of online collaboration would be perfect for me.

I researched the UN Online Volunteering site and quickly signed up to register as a volunteer. The next step was to find an organization that I felt I could contribute to the most and since this was my first time working as an online volunteer, I was not exactly sure of what to expect.

Through my search, I came across the GRACE Association and noticed that they focused on helping children which was incredibly important to me in my search for the right organization. I quickly applied to work with them almost 7 months ago in December of 2008. I wanted to work with GRACE knowing that I had Pakistani roots and that I would be able to give back to the community, especially the children, in some form brought me great joy.

After I hit the submit button for my application, I was delighted to see such a quick reply from the founder of GRACE, Khadim Hus-

sain. From that day forward, our online collaborations have brought a great feeling of accomplishment for me as well as for Khadim. He is an absolute pleasure to work with and I was so pleased to find out how sincerely he worked towards meeting extremely important goals for the organization.

Our past collaborations have included working on finalizing an Early Childhood Care Development (ECCD) concept paper as well as a budget for the program, preparing applications for submission to the Global Funds for Children, and writing a letter of inquiry to the Aga Khan Development Foundation.

We have worked to get the ECCD concept paper on the Global Giving website in order to raise funds. During our online collaborations, GRACE Association opened GRACE Public School which brought me great joy as well. This organization clearly knows where importance lies and that is in the hearts of all children. All of my collaborations have gone incredibly smooth with Khadim and he made it as exciting and rewarding as possible allowing me to provide feedback on his papers and ideas.

My current projects include working on a concept paper for the Livelihood of PWDs and Women along with helping GRACE become registered for US AID. I look forward to continue helping Khadim and all those at GRACE and have greatly enjoyed my time as a United Nations Online Volunteer. I encourage all who have a desire to help to think about online volunteering as it is an extremely rewarding experience to help people and at the same time make great friends across the world!

Cindy Noon
Preschool Teacher
Morrison Family YMCA
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA



Ms. Cindy Noon from USA joined GRACE as UN Online Volunteer in December 2008 aiming to help underprivileged countries by creating opportunities for economic development and to improve the educational systems for their citizens.

She helped out GRACE in finding useful web based resources and review documents. The collaboration on the applied assignment was ended few months later but she has a big desire to promote early childhood education in developing countries. So, in expression she sent a kit full of Early Learning Items for Children of GRACE Public School.



Grace Association Pakistan thanks for this invaluable education gift sent from Ms Cindy Noon, USA. In this regard, GRACE Public School staff and Kids of Nursery Class celebrated a "Thank You Ms. Cindy" Photo Session acknowledging her educational gift.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

THE ELSEVIER FOUNDATION

Donor: The Elsevier Foundation

Funds available: US \$5,000 - 50,000

Deadline: 9 August 2009

Funding Objective: The Elsevier Foundation is inviting proposals under its 2009 Innovative Libraries in Developing Countries. The program provides support to libraries in developing countries for adding scientific, technical and medical information. The program supports projects such as digitization of the library information, knowledge preservation, training and education for librarians and researchers and long-term partnerships between developed and developing countries for technical assistance and training.

Projects should preferably be innovative, have the potential to generate impact in the society and demonstrate sound sustainability. The Foundation provides grants for one-year projects as well as for multi-year projects.

Contact information:

The Elsevier Foundation
360 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010, USA
Phone: +1-212-229-4970
Fax: +1-212-633-3965
Email: foundation@elsevier.com
Web: <http://www.elsevierfoundation.org/guidelines.html>



Donor: UNDP

Funds available: N/A

Deadline: 1 September 2009

Funding Objective: UNDP is currently accepting applications under its 2009 Asia Pacific Human Development Fellowships. The fellowships are available in

two categories of media and academic. The theme under the media category is gender while for the academic category, the theme is climate change. The media fellowship is for media professionals in their mid-careers while the academic fellowships are available for young PhD students who are at an advanced stage of dissertation on any of the subjects related to human development. Only individuals from the Asia-Pacific region are invited to submit the application form. The application form is available on the website link given below.

Contact information:

http://www2.undprcc.lk/about_us/fellowship.php



Donor: The Conservation, Food and Health Foundation

Funds available: Two grant cycles per year during which it accepts ideas from NGOs.

Amount not mentioned

Deadline: 1 July 2009

Funding Objective: To provide funding to NGOs working for environment, food security and promotion of healthcare.

Contact information:

Terra Viva Grants
J. Laarman and C. Amilien
10, Avenue des Tilleuls
17800 Echebrune, FRANCE
Email: terravivagrants@gmail.com
Web: <http://www.terravivagrants.org/Home/contact-us>



Donor: The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

Funds available: Up to \$80,000

Deadline: 9 September 2009

Funding Objective: The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is accepting applications for 2010-2011 competition under the JR Program for International Peace in which Senior Fellowships would be awarded to NGO practitioners and others working for peace and conflict resolution. The Program awards proposals that contribute towards the understanding and resolving of conflicts as well as other challenges threatening international peace and security in a timely and significant manner. Individuals from any part of the world are eligible to apply for this program. Selected candidates will get an opportunity to be part of the 10-month duration fellowship at USIP.

Contact information

Web: <http://www.usip.org/fellows/apply.html>



Donor: Skoll Foundation

Funds available: N/A

Deadline: 9 August 2009

Funding Objective: Skoll Foundation's Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship are for those social entrepreneurs, or in simple terms, people who are leading or working in NGOs, "tolerance and human rights, health, economic and social equity, peace and security, institutional responsibility, and environmental sustainability," which are considered as the critical challenges of our times. These initiatives should have the potential of creating large-scale influence and should be based on innovation and replication. Such initiatives will be awarded by providing funding support that can be used by the NGOs to expand and create sustainability. Social entrepreneurship awards are announced throughout the year by Skoll Foundation. Organizations both from developed as well as developing countries can apply for the awards.

Contact information:

<http://www.skollfoundation.org/skollawards/index.asp>



Donor: Frontlines of Community Change in conjunction with UNESCO and the government of Denmark

Funds available: \$3,000 - \$5,000

Deadline: 15 July 2009

Funding Objective: Frontlines Forums is seeking project proposals from around the world on documentation of the local experiences regarding the impact and adaptation of climate. These are some of the objectives in detail:

- Draw international attention to the knowledge and experiences of indigenous communities and peoples living in small island, Arctic, montane, desert margin and other vulnerable environments;
- Seek community-level observations on climate change impacts, as well as local efforts to cope with and adapt to these changes;
- Provide an opportunity for communities to voice their observations, experiences and concerns, and to share and exchange them with other communities.

Contact information:

peoples@climatefrontlines.org

Web: <http://www.unep-apfed@un.org>



Donor: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Funds available: \$100,000 - \$600,000

Deadline: 27 October 2009

Funding Objective: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has issued a call for applications from NGOs (local and international) to support activities that mitigate conflict and encourage reconciliation work among various ethnic and religious communities.

Contact information:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Grants.gov

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201

Web: <http://www.grants.gov>

INTRODUCING A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION



Bismillah Village Welfare Organization (BVWO)

The Bismillah Village Welfare Organization is a non profit social welfare organization registered under the Voluntary Social Welfare Ordinance 1961. Registered in 1996, the organization has been working for the uplift of the poor and vulnerable local communities of Kachura Valley in Baltistan since its inception in 1987 as a grassroots Organization. The main focus sectors of BVWO are village welfare, education, micro credit, micro enterprises and vocational skills development for livelihoods of the poor villagers.

The NGO managed the disbursement of PKR 29, 80,000 as credit and managed business development for the clients and credit recovery on the successful initiation of microenterprises in agriculture and livestock, individual off-farm businesses). The credit scheme benefited 144 community members including women. The loan for the scheme was provided by AKRSP. The organization contributed to the development of the local economy by promoting enterprise development through credit facility.

BVWO and GRACE has agreed to promote collective community level enterprises development projects and micro finance program activities in backward and remote villages in Baltistan.

Contact:

Haji Mirza Muhammad H. Lt. (R)
Chief Patron BVWO
Ghaziabad Kachura
Skardu, Pakistan
Tel: 05815-58523

OBSERVATIONS

Mustafa Menai
Research Specialist
Mathematical Policy Research, Inc.
Princeton, NJ, USA

In my years as an international development professional, I have had the pleasure of working with GRACE Staff in various capacities. I worked with them on the ground in the Northern Areas of Pakistan from 2000-2001. I was the Manager for Program Development at the Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan and was the liaison to Mr. Khadim Hussain and his dedicated staff on educational projects in the area.

I am highly impressed with the organizational ability, creativity, and sheer dedication of GRACE staff. Faced with such daunting challenges as lack of resources, and tough terrain, the Grace Staff has continued to provide ever expanding basic services to people of the region. Most impressive has been the improvement in female educational enrollment and achievement.

I believe the key strengths of Grace over other development agencies are: Intimate knowledge of the needs and workable solutions for the local population. e.g. the workers are highly trusted by the end beneficiaries, and proficient in the local language and various dialects. The educational attainment and wide exposure of the staff and worked with many domestic and international experts. Steadily expanding organizational capacity. Since the staff and general body are drawn from the community itself, the capacity to absorb, disburse and monitor funds is impressive.

Imran Nazir Rana
Program Manager
Leonard Cheshire Disability and Development
Program – Pakistan

I know Grace Association Pakistan for the last three years. I am highly impressed with the ability, innovation and dedication of this organization which is delivering the best of facing haunting challenges like severe climatic conditions, difficult terrain, lack of resources etc but GRACE has been providing ever expanding basic services to people in its operational areas.

For instance, I am happy to see the impressive number in female and out of school children in educational institutions and sensitization and services providing for peoples with disabilities.

GET INVOLVED

Make a donation

GRACE relies on the generosity of individuals and private foundations for helping bring the lifelong gift of literacy to children in our country. If you would like to support our efforts, make a contribution today.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to be a part of GRACE's work. We rely on the valuable support of volunteers who help us change the lives of communities living in poverty in Northern Pakistan.

Take action!

Contact

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27-E, 3rd Floor Office No. 5 Ali Plaza
Fazal Haq Road Blue Area
Islamabad, Pakistan

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GRACE ASSOCIATION · PAKISTAN
THE GRASSROOTS' ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2009