

# THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2011

Our online  
volunteers are taking  
their contributions to  
GRACE a step further,  
becoming on-site  
volunteers in  
Pakistan



# CONTENT

The Voice of Grassroots  
01/2011



## Cover photo

“Studying for the chance to become a teacher”, Sindh, Pakistan.

Author: DFID - UK Department for International Development | Wikimedia Commons 2011

03 Editorial

05 About GRACE

06 Pakistan flood

## GRACE Activities and Events

- 09 Helping people with disabilities to help themselves
- 11 Opening the doors for education in Layyah district
- 12 Villagers learn to tread lighting on the earth
- 14 ACCESS student from Skardu in Uncle Sam's land
- 16 Pakistan-Japan collaboration builds flood wall
- 18 English empowers Skardu students to make global connection
- 21 Groups unite to respond to needs of disabled people
- 22 Japan pledges flood support
- 24 Massive earthquake and tsunami devastate Japan
- 25 ACCESS students visit US Embassy

27 Dream is Power, Karrar Hussain Jafar Story, Quetta Baluchistan

30 Volunteering at GRACE: My Observations by Kate Anderson Simons, USA

34 Funding Opportunities for Grassroots Organisations

36 Get involved

37 Contacts

## Editorial Board

Managing Editor	Khadim Hussain
Senior Editor	Lauren Salathiel (UN Online Volunteer)
Editors	Maliha Shah (UN Online Volunteer)
	Christine Bukania (UN Online Volunteer)
Designer	Yvonne Nelson (UN Online Volunteer)
Images	Archive GRACE
	Wikimedia Commons

Board members	Shamshad Hussain
	Muhammad Qasim
	Muhammad Hussain
	Muhammad Naeem Khan
	Naseer Ahmad Virk
	Mehreen Zubair
	Muhammad Babar Shahzad

The Voice of Grassroots is a biannual newsletter published by GRACE Association Pakistan | Letters to the editor or articles, with the writer's name and address, should be emailed to [grace@grace.org.pk](mailto:grace@grace.org.pk) or faxed to + 92. 51.2829970. Letters and articles may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. | Issue 1/2011 | © Grace Association Pakistan 2011 | [www.grace.org.pk](http://www.grace.org.pk)

# EDITORIAL

Voice for  
social  
justice and  
democracy



GRACE Association Pakistan prides itself on its work to engage local communities and promote inclusiveness, sustainability and equality. Of course, this task can only be accomplished by forging strong partnerships with both local and international associates who share our belief that the aspirations of every community, and every individual - particularly women and children - should be respected and valued.

This year GRACE has continued to work with its valued partners, promoting networking and rights-based advocacy for social justice and democracy on behalf of grassroots communities in the least developed parts of the country.

Our new initiatives have empowered our target groups, including disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable women, children, men and elderly people as well as those with disabilities. With technology at our fingertips, GRACE can share each and every one of its initiatives not only with local communities, but also with a global audience through The Voice of Grassroots online newsletter.

GRACE has started expanding its reach in the coun-

try, implementing new projects in the rural Punjab and Sindh provinces. Our English Micro Scholarship Program, offered in conjunction with the US Embassy Islamabad, has given students from the isolated mountainous region of Baltistan the opportunity to build their confidence, strive for gender equality and make global connections with other young people, all via their English language studies.

The greatest evidence that this program is having a positive impact in Baltistan came when a 17-year-old female student, who had been participating in the ACCESS Program Skardu, visited the United States independently to represent Pakistan at various forums. Given that girls' rights to education have, until now, been severely compromised or denied outright in Baltistan, this young woman's trip was indeed a momentous occasion for the province, and for GRACE.

“

GRACE's new initiatives  
have empowered  
disadvantaged,  
marginalised and  
vulnerable women,  
children and men



## Our commitment for 2011-12 is to continue to develop new benefits for the Pakistani communities we serve

Our promotion of educational equality for women is indeed making its mark.

Climate change has been another major item on GRACE's agenda in Baltistan. GRACE team members from the region are currently introducing a sustainable model of climate change mitigation in Skardu, Baltistan, teaching local people skills to enable them to sustainably use natural resources in their daily activities. This includes introducing community members to fuel-efficient technologies. GRACE anticipates that the knowledge gained through this work in Baltistan will be able to be replicated and applied to other communities across Pakistan.

GRACE's affiliation with the United Nations Online Volunteering program has been integral to growing the organisation and helping to promote peace and sustainable development in Pakistan.

Online volunteers have played key roles in addressing GRACE's need for technical human resources. However, we are now also noticing that our collaboration with online volunteers is translating into new interest in Pakistan and GRACE's activities, with many online volunteers visiting the country to participate in our grassroots development activities.

Kate Anderson Simons, from New York, USA, is the most recent example of the crossover from "online volunteer" to "on-site volunteer". GRACE was grateful that Ms Simons was able to travel to Pakistan to share her assistance and skills, particularly given that the current international political climate seldom presents an accurate image of Pakistan or its people, and promotes fear about the country. GRACE's team was proud to be able to show Ms Simons that the country is willing to embrace international visitors, and that it is a safe and hospitable place to visit. Ms Simons has

shared her experiences with us inside this newsletter.

GRACE owes its success in contributing to the quality of life of marginalised people in Pakistan to its energetic and committed board, its dedicated volunteers and staff members, and generous supporters. Our commitment for 2011-12 is to continue to build on these successes, develop new benefits for the communities we serve, and provide a voice for grassroots development projects in Pakistan.

Thank you for your support.

**Khadim Hussain**

GRACE Association Pakistan  
founder and chief executive

# ABOUT GRACE

## What is GRACE?

The Grassroots Association for Community Empowerment (GRACE) is a non-profit organisation (NPO) registered under Companies' Ordinance 1984. It has developed out of an indigenous organisation established

in 1992. Areas of interventions have expanded from education and health to environment, NRM, Watsan and Livelihoods vis-à-vis the target communities have expanded from the communities of remote villages of Baltistan to all over Pakistan.

**Vision:** GRACE's efforts contribute to a world that recognises, respects, and values the socio-economic, political, legal, and environmental aspirations of marginalised and vulnerable communities - particularly women and children - on an equal basis to promote a sustainable, equitable, prosperous, and peaceful society.

**Mission:** GRACE endeavours to empower and improve the quality of life of the marginalised and vulnerable communities of the country through welfare, participatory research and development, capacity building, promotion of best practices and partnership building, advocacy, and by launching sustainable and replicable innovative projects.

**Values:** GRACE has adopted two core values including social justice and equity (rights, vulnerability, and access) and democracy (participation, transparency, accountability, rules and regulations) for its institutional norms and programmatic operations.

**Strategic principles and interventions:** Its programs are run through the strategic principles of social mobilisation, volunteerism, advocacy, human rights,

partnership building, and networking. The conceptual designs and the implementation framework of all the programs and projects follow a set of strategic interventions including: education and awareness, human and institutional development (HID), equitable community development, participatory planning and implementation, gender and diversity empowerment and local resource mobilisation.



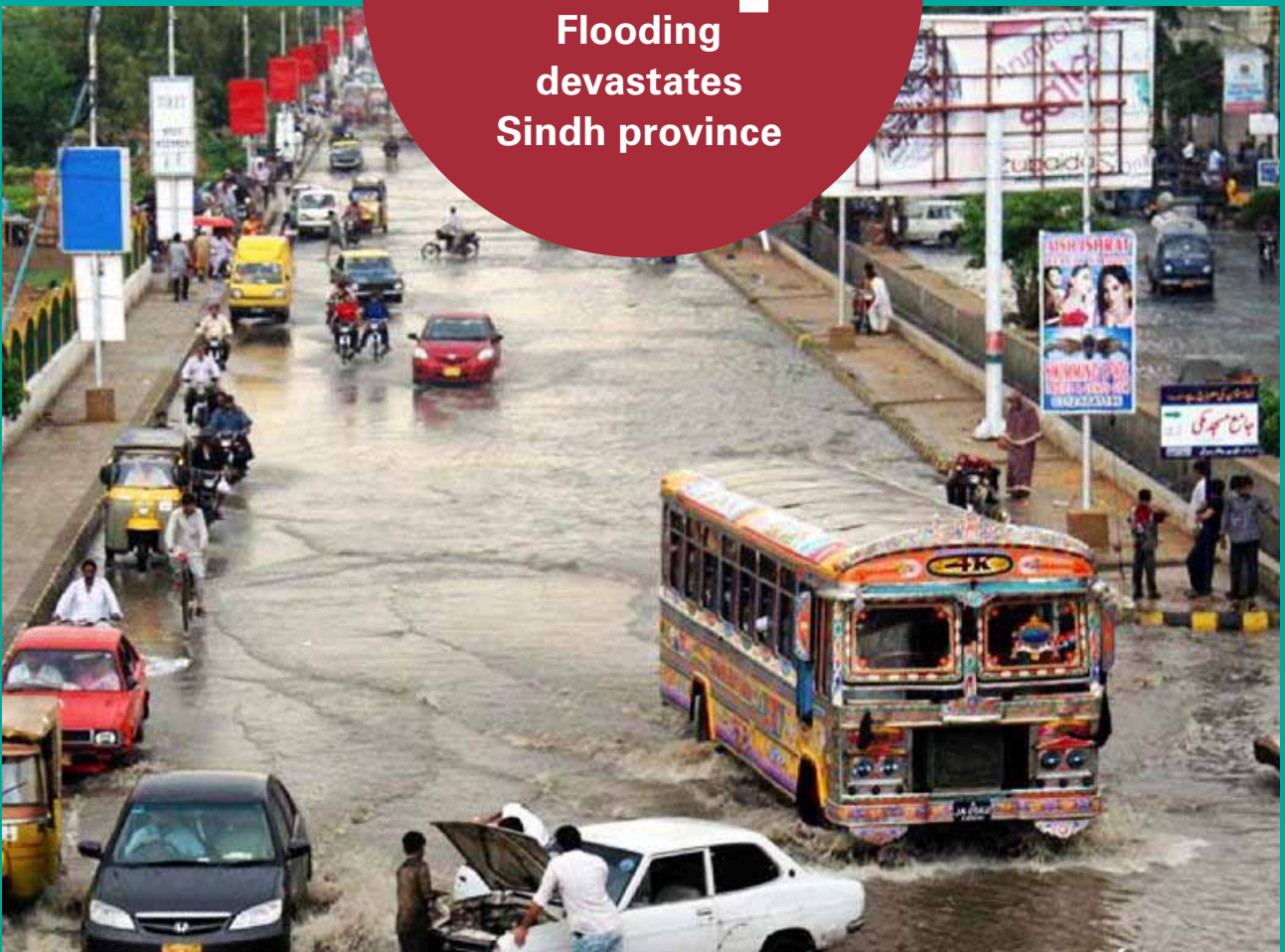
Our core values are  
social justice, equity  
and democracy





# Help

Flooding  
devastates  
Sindh province



# FLOODING DEVASTATES SINDH PROVINCE



By Mehreen Zubair  
Lahore, September 20, 2011



Heavy monsoonal rain during August and September 2011 has devastated Sindh province in south Pakistan. The World Health Organisation reports that rain and subsequent flooding

has affected 22 districts and 20,670 villages across 4.5 million acres of land. It has impacted about 5.35 million people and caused 233 deaths.

Currently, more than two million people are suffering from flood-related diseases, including skin infections, diarrhoea and malaria, while more than 7,000 people have been treated for snakebites. About one quarter of the region's health facilities are inaccessible, submerged by floodwater, or otherwise damaged, while the UN's refugee agency has said the flooding is so bad that some areas will remain under water for six months or more.

However, there are reports that the southern port city of Karachi is showing some signs of returning to normality after the heavy downpours.

Meanwhile, GRACE's volunteers from Badin and Umerkot have reported that some schools whose premises were not flooded have managed to reopen after being closed for two days. But flooding elsewhere in the southern province continues to cause concern. The UN children's agency spokesman in Pakistan, Dan Rohrman, said it was a serious situation "in particular for children who are always the most vulnerable in emergency situations".

"This is another huge flood that has hit Pakistan in less than a year so it's really a double disaster," he

said. "We have assessed 16 out of 22 districts and roughly 1.8 million people have left their homes and 750,000 are living in temporary sites."

The home minister Pakistan Rahman Malik said aid agencies had started to prepare for floods this year because of the devastating floods of 2010, but the scale of the recent flooding was immense, with three times the normal amount of rain. "We are using the resources that we have available at hand but it's not nearly enough for what we need," Mr Malik said.

A National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) spokesman said that if the international community failed to provide immediate assistance, the population would be at risk of contracting diseases. He said he was particularly concerned about the plight of 500,000 children below the age of five. Numerous organisations, including the NDMA and the Sindh provincial government, have been involved in relief and rehabilitation activities.

GRACE Pakistan is looking to global community again to help the communities affected by the recent floods rebuild their lives. You can help by donating to GRACE Association Pakistan, or other organisations involved in relief activities.

Contact	Muhammad Naeem Khan GRACE Association Pakistan
Phone	+92 51 2829970, Cell: +92 302 8163353
Account Nr	0224810611001321
Bank Name	MCB Bank Limited

Bank address	Abpara Market Branch 0597 Hameed Chamber, Islamabad
--------------	--

Bank Telegraphic address MUSCAP BANK

“

Our schools aim at empowering grassroots for the 21st century, providing girls, boys, children with disabilities, disengaged youth and displaced communities access to free education



# ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

1

## Helping people with disabilities help themselves



*Muhammad Hussain, Program Assistant  
Skardu, September 6, 2011*

People in Skardu who have disabilities are still excluded from development initiatives or educational opportunities, and have limited access to resources to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

However, GRACE Association Pakistan together with the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Development Program Pakistan (LCDDP) have, through their small business initiative, demonstrated that these people's potential, when they are given the chance to participate, is outstanding.

GRACE and LCDDP's most recent small-scale livelihoods project was introduced in the isolated mountainous region of Gilgit-Baltistan.

A great number of people with disabilities applied to participate in the program and access educational, business and health care assistance. (Further to this, GRACE has a list of about 300 people with disabilities seeking assistance, and the number is growing each year as GRACE volunteers conduct surveys.)

Eighteen disabled people with a diverse range of existing skills were selected to participate, proposing to start up such businesses as tailoring enterprises, small stationery and cosmetics shops, typing and printing services for nearby schools, and even a community rental scheme for an apricot seed cutting machine.



“

GRACE Association Pakistan has demonstrated that when people with disabilities are given the chance to participate, their potential is outstanding



cent of the population has a disability due to tough climatic conditions, border wars between India and Pakistan, mining and lack of access to health facilities,” Mr Hussain said.

“This is exacerbated by local beliefs that disabilities are God’s punishment for a parent’s, or disabled person’s, bad deeds.

“Being a victim of polio, myself, since an early age, I feel a responsibility to work for fellow people with disabilities in Baltistan”.



He said GRACE Association would advocate on behalf of people with disabilities in Baltistan for better access to health, education and business opportunities as well as lobbying Skardu’s district administration, district health officer, medical superintendent, district headquarter hospital and social welfare officers, and National Councils for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Islamabad to obtain special computerised national identity cards for people with disabilities.

Mr Hussain expressed his determination that the organisation would continue working proactively to improve the conditions of people with disabilities in Baltistan through inclusive education and development.

“This is just the beginning of our work in this field, and once we see that people participating in the program are demonstrating good results, we will expand this project in cooperation with supporting organisations,” he said.

GRACE will continue to update its supporters on the progress of this project, and will conduct regular visits to the program participants in order to gauge their performance and provide technical assistance.

GRACE gave these people a boost in their chosen professions by arranging, with LCDDP, for the distribution of sewing machines, an apricot seed cutting machine, stationery shop items, cosmetics and a computer, during a special event on September 6, 2011.

GRACE Association Pakistan founder and chief executive Khadim Hussain said the organisation was committed to “helping people help themselves”.

“GRACE understands the problems of people with disabilities in Skardu Baltistan region, where 11 per

“

The school represents an important step in redressing an imbalance in Layyah, where females are often denied basic education

2

### Opening the doors for education in Layyah district



*Naseer Ahmad Virk  
Layyah Punjab, August 10, 2011*

The children of Bhagal Chak 279 and surrounding villages now have greater access to educational facilities with the opening of the recently renovated GRACE Indus Public School at Bhagal Chak 279 in Layyah district.

GRACE Association Pakistan founder and chief executive Khadim Hussain visited Layyah on August 5, 2011, to meet with students, teachers and the school management committee and take a tour of the new school building.

The facility features two floors, eight classrooms, and a school office, which is still under construction, and will provide primary education during the morning shift.

Presently 170 male and female students attend the school, under the guidance of eight dedicated female teachers.

The school facility represents an important step in redressing an education imbalance in Layyah, where females are often denied basic education, and the government education department has only limited resources to provide educational services.

Most schools in Layyah currently lack basic facilities such as classrooms, boundary walls, safe drinking



water, latrines and furniture.

Underdeveloped teaching practices create further problems, and teachers are deprived of support and supervision from line departments, and rarely have the opportunity to undertake personal development training.

The results are manifested in gender insensitive behaviour and an environment that does not encourage children to thrive.



“

Harsh climatic conditions, inaccessible mountainous terrain and scarce natural resources have made life difficult for the ever-growing population of Gilgit-Baltistan

GRACE Association Pakistan is working with the Layyah community and the Indus Development Society to respond to these issues and improve the quality of local educational opportunities, and therefore, local socio-economic conditions. The GRACE Indus Public School is the first step in this regard.

The school looks forward to enhancing participation rates of disadvantaged communities and individuals, especially girls, in community activities including school council capacity building, health and hygiene campaigns, girls' club formation, the staging of extra-curricular events, drawing, sports and debate competitions, and community-led advocacy and lobbying activities.

GRACE is also working to develop a partnership with USAID Pakistan and local education authorities to address the aforementioned issues faced by children.

3

### Villagers learn climate change adaptation



By Muhammad Hassan, TMCS Skardu  
July, 2011

Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the most ecologically fragile areas in Pakistan.

Harsh climatic conditions, inaccessible mountainous terrain and scarce natural resources – particularly when it comes to forested areas, water, and arable land – have made life difficult for the ever-growing population.





“

The project is working to empower women to take an active role in climate change mitigation by participating in decision-making and enterprise development



People lack access to alternative energy sources, income generation opportunities, and are constantly struggling to survive against the backdrop of increasing poverty.

Women and children are bearing the brunt of environmental degradation, which is caused by lack of community awareness about environmental conservation and mismanagement of resources, and further aggravated by the impact of climate change.

It was for this reason that GRACE Association organised a climate change mitigation workshop for 30 men and 28 women from the communities of Kwardu, Shigar and Tormik Rondu.

Held on July 10 and 11, 2011, the workshop was facilitated by The Management Consultancy Services Skardu, and hosted by a Skardu hotel.

These workshops focused on educating participants about the meaning and causes of climate change, approaches to sustainable natural resource management and how communities could contribute to the mitigation of climate change.

The trainees also learnt about the causes and phases of natural disasters, principles of and approaches to disaster risk reduction and their role in safeguarding water resources and conserving medicinal plants.

To achieve its ends, this initiative aims to introduce appropriate technologies, agro-forestry, alternate energy sources, energy efficient and water conservation technology.

The workshops sought to empower participants to develop non-timber forest-product-based enterprises as a means of reducing their reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods and food security.

The project is also working to empower women to take an active role in climate change mitigation by participating in decision-making, capacity building and enterprise development.

By training the men on the first day of the workshop and the women on the next day, as well as using discussions, lectures, presentations and creating opportunities for trainees to share their experiences, the facilitators - Kacho Basharat Hussain and Syed Mohammad Agha, Wazir Ejaz Hussain and Muhammad Hussain - ensured that trainees participated actively throughout the training.

Feedback at the end of the workshop demonstrated that participants had learnt skills they could go on to further develop.

Kaneez Fatima and Maryam Dolati, who took part in the women's workshop, said it was interesting to learn about the effects of climate change, and to discover ways to adapt their lifestyles to help reduce their impact on the earth.

“

Being selected for English ACCESS summer camp in the United States in July 2011 was like a dream come true

They said they would take the information learnt during the workshop back to their respective villages to share with family members and friends, and would work hard to ensure they used natural resources sustainably in the future.

During the closing session, GRACE officials along with One UN Joint Program on Environment civil society coordinator Shehzad Ashraf spoke to participants about the Grassroots Initiative Program.

Mr Ashraf praised GRACE Association's efforts to develop innovative initiatives to help communities adapt to climate change and other pressing issues, and said he hoped the training would enable the villages to further participate in climate change mitigation strategies.

4

#### **ACCESS Student from Skardu in Uncle Sam's land**

*Rubina Ehsan, 17  
Student, GRACE Public School,  
English Access Micro scholarship Program, Skardu  
July 2011*

Being selected for English ACCESS summer camp in the United States during July 2011 was like a dream come true. I was excited beyond words and thrilled to the core.

Yet at the same time a caution bell rang inside my head. Before going to the United States a lot of concerns came to my mind, and of course the cultural taboos in Pakistan led me to have reservations about



“

It doesn't matter where we come from;  
we are all people who share similar  
dreams of prosperity and progress



American lifestyle.

I couldn't easily overlook all the things I use to hear about social gatherings, law, and even food in America, which was very different from Pakistan. I was anxious about whether or not I would be able to adapt, however as soon as I touched down in the United State, I realised my nervousness was just fear of the unknown. The people welcomed me with open arms, the warmth of their smiles made me feel at home immediately.

Owing to this program I got a golden opportunity to spend three wonderful weeks in the United States of America. Thousands of miles away from my beloved country, I realised that it was up to me to represent Pakistan in a good way, so I did.

I made lots of friends and tried to learn about cultural diversity. I got involved in different games like soccer, basketball and volleyball. I volunteered at the senior centre and math class.

Despite representing Pakistan, I felt a strange freedom and discovered that it doesn't matter where we come from; we are all people who share similar dreams of prosperity and progress.

I was comfortable wearing Pakistani attire and people appreciated the fact that I was portraying my culture. I tried to symbolise how big-hearted and friendly Pakistanis are. I am sure that my positive attitude has changed many people's opinion about Pakistan.

It was a truly unforgettable magical time just like "Alice in Wonderland"...me, in Uncle Sam's land.





“

Four villages were totally washed away,  
roads and bridges were destroyed,  
houses were buried under mud and  
livelihoods obliterated

5

### Pakistan-Japan NPOs collaboration builds floodwall



*Muhammad Qasim,  
Skardu, June 30, 2011*

Devastating flooding, heavy rainstorms and land-slides hit Pakistan during July and August 2010.

The Himalayan Karakoram Mountain valleys and the Skardu and Ganche districts of Gilgit-Baltistan experienced the region's worst deluge in 80 years.

Dozens of people, including women and children, died in two villages in Skardu and Ganche.

Four other villages were totally washed away, roads and bridges were destroyed, houses were buried under mud and rocks, property - including cropping lands, fruits and forest trees and standing crops - was destroyed, livestock lost and livelihoods obliterated.

According to the Gilgit Baltistan Government, the disaster directly affected a total of 250,000 people, while 1.8 million were indirectly affected in the region.

Furthermore, the flooding destroyed the water courses and channels that irrigated the agricultural lands and channels turned into flooding streams, destroying all stocks of crops and dry fruit that communities were depending upon for food.

Khar Basho, located on top of a hill near natural forest 53km from Skardu city, was one of the worst affected villages.





“

Despite locals' early concerns that their livelihoods would be forever ruined by the threat of flood, JIPPO and GRACE have provided a glimmer of hope



Basho has always been particularly prone to floods, due to the surrounding mountains, which are particularly susceptible to erosion, and its extreme monsoon seasons.

The local population consisted of 78 households - a total of 700 people - with residents eking out a living in agriculture and livestock. The flooding of Basho stream destroyed their infrastructure and agricultural assets.

The stream was only 20 feet wide before the flooding in August 2010, but heavy rain caused it to swell to a width of about 300 feet for a 6000-foot stretch, destroying about 25 acres of cultivated land, demolishing hundreds of fruit and forest trees, and devastating the local economy.



Despite locals' early concerns that their livelihoods would be forever ruined by the ongoing threat of flooding, the Japanese non-profit organisation JIPPO and GRACE Association Pakistan have been able to provide a glimmer of hope for the people of Basho, constructing a 500-foot-long flood protection wall at a critical point along the banks of the flood-prone stream.



The community continues to request that a 6000-foot-long wall be constructed, however resource constraints mean that the two organisations must focus on providing protection in the areas that have proven to be weakest in the face of floods.

The flood protection wall was constructed under the supervision of GRACE Association Pakistan in partnership with the local community-based organisation Anjuman Sub-e-Naveed Basho.

GRACE Association completed the participatory

“

JIPPO's donation has given the community increased confidence in its future

needs identification, assessment, project planning, fundraising, coordination with supporting organisation (JIPPO), project management, supervision and monitoring during the implementation period.

The project started on March 1, 2011 and was completed in two months by April 30, 2011. JIPPO Japan contributed PKR267, 000.00 (\$US3,179.00) to the project, while GRACE, and the project community's contribution totalled PKR460,000.00 (\$US5,476.19) - the total cost of the project was PKR727,000 (\$US8,655.19).

GRACE Association Pakistan is grateful for JIPPO's kind donation, which has given the Basho community increased confidence in its future, prepared local residents for future disasters, and allowed them to resume cultivating their land.

6

### English empowers Skardu students to make global connection



*Shamshad Hussain, English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program coordinator Skardu, April 19, 2011*

GRACE Association Pakistan celebrated the first year anniversary of the English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program, Skardu, on April 19, 2011 at GRACE Public School, Skardu, Baltistan.

Hosted by GRACE Association Pakistan chief executive Khadim Hussain, the event was attended by chief guest, principal of the Government Degree College for Women Skardu Dr Uzma Saleem, while Electronic





“

Students reported they could now read, write and understand English



Media president Nisar Abbas presided.

Teachers and students from 18 partner schools in the ACCESS Program also attended, alongside parents, social workers, academic and media representatives and GRACE volunteers.

Students of the program presented a number of interesting items during the event, including debates on the roles of the private and public sector in promoting quality education, a skit on learning English through the English ACCESS Program, as well as sharing their reflections on their studies during the past year.



Some students reported that when the program first commenced, they were unable to speak a single word of English, but they could now read, write and understand English, and were confident speaking with native speakers.

A faculty member of the ACCESS Program, Skardu, Mir Muhammad, spoke of his experience with the program, and reported that the 80 male and female students - who come from disadvantaged families - had shown excellent results since participating in the course.



Wazir Shamshad Hussain, ACCESS Program coordinator, said he was pleased the students were learning English at a GRACE public school, and reminded them that they were part of a larger international program - the ACCESS program operates in 45 countries around the world, and in Pakistan alone works with 5000 students in all five provinces.

GRACE Association Pakistan chief executive and host of the first anniversary celebration, Khadim Hussain, said young people could play a vital role in any society in dealing with modern challenges.

“

The promotion of science and technology was the key for development, but lack of an opportunity to learn English hindered scientific education

He said the promotion of science and technology was the key for development, but lack of an opportunity to learn English hindered scientific education.

This was the impetus for GRACE's collaboration with the United States Embassy in Islamabad a year ago in order to bring about a program that would improve disadvantaged students' English reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills.

Mr Hussain said the project also focused on building confidence and character, career counselling, and familiarising students with other cultures so they could take up international scholarship opportunities.

He said all this would enable students to, later in life, play an effective role in community development.

Mr Hussain took the opportunity to thank the United States Embassy for its support in providing a two-year English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program series for Skardu children.

He also thanked Dr Saleem, ACCESS Program staff, parents and supporters, and congratulated students on their first successful year in the program.

He said he hoped local stakeholders, including Ulema, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, community elders, civil society organisations, the media, the student community and other young people would collaborate with GRACE in the future.





“

The meeting aimed at creating a clearer understanding of the needs of disabled persons



7

## DPOs unite to respond to needs of disabled people



*Muhammad Babar Shahzad  
Islamabad, April 2, 2011*

GRACE Association Pakistan has been invited, together with 46 other established relief organisations working across the country, to found national Disabled Peoples' Organisations Council.

The invitation came from Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), the Pakistan Government-sponsored body responsible for the provision of social protection to needy segments of society, including the disabled.

At the end of March, PBM facilitated an inaugural meeting in which all 47 invited organisations participated.

The two-fold objectives of the meeting were to promote solidarity among organisations working in the area of disability, and to provide a single, strong voice aimed at creating a clearer understanding of, and a more effective response to, the needs of disabled persons

PBM managing director Zamurrud Khan welcomed delegates to the meeting, and pledged full government support for the new venture.

GRACE Association Pakistan founder and chief executive Khadim Hussain was elected as an executive member while Muhammad Ibrahim was selected as provincial coordinator for Gilgit-Baltistan.

“

The newly established DPO Council has resolved to work for the benefit of disabled persons as well as accelerate efforts for the creation of a barrier-free Pakistan

GRACE Association Pakistan expresses particular thanks to Mr Khan and Mr Shafiq-ur-Rahman, head of the Normalisation of Persons with Disabilities Directorate at the PBM, for their efforts in working to improve services to disabled persons in Pakistan.

The newly established DPO Council has resolved to work effectively for the benefit of disabled persons as well as accelerate efforts for the creation of an inclusive, barrier-free society in Pakistan.

In term of next steps, the chairman of the new organisation, Asim Zafar, resolved to create a constitution for the DPO Council within the coming weeks so the council can begin its work as soon as possible.

In addition, the PBM needs to ratify the Disabled Peoples' Organisations Council, and a request will be made for the president of Pakistan to meet the council to review new policies designed to benefit disabled persons.



8

### GGP Japan pledged flood support



*Muhammad Qasim,  
Skardu, March 20, 2011*

Grassroots grant program consultant from the Government of Japan Embassy in Pakistan, Harumi Fujisaki, visited GRACE Association, Skardu from March 14 to 19, 2011.

She visited beneficiary communities in four target villages, including Astana Bala, Paeen, Brolmo and





“

The men, women and children told of their fear of another flood, and said that without a flood wall, they were anxious that heavy rain might wash away the village



Gultary colonies, for whose 13,000-strong population the Japanese Government funded the provision of safe drinking water.

Ms Fujisaki said she was satisfied with feedback from the communities, particularly in Brolmo Colony, whose population migrated from the Indo-Pak border area due to wars between the countries in 1965, 1971 and the 1999 Kargil War. This community had lacked drinking water facilities until Japanese assistance recently enabled it to access water “on its doorstep”.



On March 17, 2011, Ms Fujisaki accompanied the GRACE team to Kharku in Khaplu, the village worst affected by flooding in the Ganche district of Baltistan.

There she met with community members who spoke about their need for construction of a flood wall at Kharku, to replace a wall damaged by the devastating floods in August 2010.

The men, women and children of Kharku told of their fear of another flood, and said that without a flood protection wall, they were anxious that any sudden heavy rain might wash away the village - and all the redevelopment activities undertaken since August 2010 by humanitarian organisations.



Ms Fujisaki assured the GRACE team of the Japanese Government’s cooperation and support for reconstruction of a flood protection wall.

GRACE Association Pakistan has now developed a project proposal that was submitted to the Japanese Embassy in Pakistan on June 2011, and looks forward to working with the Japanese Government to assist the people of Kharku village.

“

GRACE professes its admiration for the grace and resilience with which the Japanese have dealt with their recent challenges

9

### Massive earthquake and tsunami in Japan



*Khadim Hussain, GRACE Association  
Pakistan - chief executive  
Islamabad, March 12, 2011*

GRACE Association Pakistan expresses its sympathy and moral support to the people of Japan who have suffered and continue to face challenges as a result of earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.

A magnitude 8.9 earthquake hit the Pacific Ocean near Japan, causing a tsunami that wreaked unprecedented havoc on lives and properties.

As reported by the media in Japan, waves as high as 20 metres destroyed seawalls and buildings, resulting in fires on oil tanks as people braced themselves for a series of aftershocks as strong as magnitude 7+.

During this most difficult time, the GRACE Association Pakistan conveys its sympathy and support to the Japanese people, in general, and our friends and supporters, in particular, as we profess our admiration for the grace and resilience with which the Japanese have dealt with their challenges.

GRACE reiterates its sympathy and support to our Japanese colleagues and prays they will find the strength of spirit to rise above these difficult times.





“

The study tour to the US Embassy in Islamabad aimed to help students overcome cultural barriers between the city and rural areas



10

#### ACCESS students visit US Embassy



*Shamshad Hussain, English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program coordinator  
Islamabad, January 26, 2011*

“I want to fight poverty and ignorance and give opportunity to those people who are locked out”  
Russell Simmons



In the extreme north of Pakistan, is the newly created province of Gilgit Baltistan, a land of tranquillity and natural beauty.

Skardu is the capital of Baltistan. Local residents live a life steeped in tradition, and seldom venture into other cities or provinces.

As such students have little experience of larger cities.

GRACE Association Pakistan organised a study tour for students of the English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program, Skardu, to provide learning opportunities in Islamabad and to give them a look inside the city's United State Embassy.

This study tour also aimed to:

- Help students overcome cultural barriers between the city and rural areas;
- Provide opportunities for ACCESS students to exchange ideas, make friends and learn from each other;
- Build student confidence and expand their understanding of diverse cultures;



“

Students said it had been their dream to visit the US Embassy, and the public affairs staff gave the group a warm welcome

- Introduce the US program administration to students;
- Brainstorm for scholarship opportunities; and,
- Provide an opportunity for career counselling.

When I started working as coordinator of the English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program, my impression of the students was very good.

I engaged the students in different activities and dialogues. They were very intelligent and always followed what I was saying.

I had already told them about our program manager, Micah Rasher, and they were excited to see him during the ACCESS Program Ceremony at GRACE Public School, Skardu, but inclement weather meant he could not attend.

Instead, we promised students we would take them to Islamabad in winter so they could visit the US Embassy and meet Mr Rasher and other embassy staff.

When the students from Skardu reached Islamabad they were quite nervous about being in a big city, however their nerves were calmed when they visited the Islamabad ACCESS Centre, where they were able to meet a number of other students and participate in a learning session.

Students said it had been their dream to visit the US Embassy, and the public affairs staff gave the group a warm welcome.

The students finally had an opportunity to meet Mr Rasher, and left the meeting filled with enthusiasm for their studies.



# DREAM IS POWER

KARRAR HUSSAIN



## Inspiring success stories

### **Those who dare to dream: Karrar's quest from the brick huts of Baluchistan to the halls of Harvard**

On the outskirts of Quetta, in the barren valley of Mariabad, the tribal Hazara people lead simple lives.

Nestled along the rugged hillside, the community ekes out a very basic living, their aspirations concentrated on simply sustaining themselves.

But there was a lone dreamer - Karrar Hussain Jaffar, son of a trader who sold Jinnah caps - who, through determination and dedication, reached a level of academic achievement unimaginable and unprecedented in his hometown. His journey to Harvard is an inspirational story and a wonderful reality.

"My childhood friends and playmates now drive Suzukis and rickshaws in Quetta for a living, while I am a PhD student in the US," Karrar said. "I often wonder why, out of all the people in my community, God chose me for these opportunities?"

He attributes his success to his father's support and encouragement. Karrar said he vividly remembered his father showing him an advertisement for Lahore University of Management Sciences' national outreach program. "I was a FSc student pursuing engineering and had no idea about LUMS at that time, so I didn't take it seriously", he said.

However, during his winter break, he attended a presentation about the national outreach program. "At the end of the presentation we all took a pre-screening exam," he said. "A few weeks later, I got a letter from LUMS inviting me to attend sponsored classes for SAT preparation."

After four weeks of rigorous study for the SATs, Karrar was in love with LUMS - the grandeur of the institute and charismatic mentors had captured his imagination.

"I never knew things could be so perfect; it was like I was in a foreign country," he said. "I was motivated and excited to join the institution."

But he confessed that having overlooked English as a



“

Because of my success,  
my parents let my sister study  
in Lahore



colonial remnant, he faced a Herculean struggle that often left him frustrated.

Yet his hard work paid off - he passed the screening exam, scored impressively in the SAT exam and also earned himself a full scholarship and monthly stipend at LUMS. "I came to LUMS in very high spirits," Karrar said.

But he had yet to see the institution in full bloom.

When he saw throngs of confident students clad in western wear, casually conversing in English, his excitement gave way to culture shock. "I was used to wearing shalwar kamiz, but at LUMS most people were wearing jeans," he said. "I would greet people by saying 'salaam', while the other students would ask 'what's up?'"

Slowly Karrar began to overcome his discomfort and broadened his circle, befriending students from Lyceum and Karachi grammar schools.

He graduated on the dean's honours list, with a cumulative grade point average of 3.7 and 3.68 in his

majors, math and economics, respectively, and received a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the US, at Harvard University.

Surprisingly, unlike the initial discomfort he felt at LUMS, life at Harvard was smooth sailing for Karrar. "After LUMS, I was used to diverse people and culture so it was easy to adjust in the USA," Karrar said.

Finished with his masters, Karrar began studying for a PhD in economics from the University of Southern California. However, he said his heart still belonged in the valley.

"When I first went for my interview to go to Harvard, I told the interview panel that I want to come home after completing studies; that's where I belong," he said. "I want to increase educational awareness in Baluchistan-particularly among people from my community.

"Because of my success, my parents let my sister study in Lahore and my brother was motivated to get a scholarship to study in Australia. I'm sure I can now show people the value of education."

“

GRACE endeavours to empower and improve the quality of life of the marginalised and vulnerable communities in the least developed parts of Pakistan.

We do this through welfare, participatory research and development, capacity building, and in promoting best practices, partnership building, and advocacy. Additionally, by launching sustainable and replicable innovative projects

# VOLUNTEERING AT GRACE

KATE ANDERSON SIMONS (USA)

Reflections of  
an online-turned  
-on-site  
volunteer

## The long road to Skardu - reflections of an online-turned-on-site volunteer

*Kate Anderson Simons,  
GRACE Association Volunteer from USA*

Biography: Kate Anderson Simons is an education consultant who has consulted on domestic and international education projects for the Brookings Institution, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Child Trends, Inc., US Department of Health and Human Services, and a number of local organisations. Her interests focus on vulnerable children, both in the US and internationally, who are affected by poverty, armed conflict, and inequitable learning environments. She holds a BA in Psychology from Pepperdine University and a Masters in Public Policy from Georgetown University. She has been an active online volunteer for GRACE Association Pakistan since 2007. Here is her story of volunteering at GRACE Association Pakistan.

My journey to Skardu began several years ago, with the idea that I wanted to visit Skardu and work with GRACE Association Pakistan on early childhood capacity development.

Along the way, I travelled to the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC 10 times to check on the status of my visa; to Islamabad via Doha with a diversion to Lahore because of weather conditions; twice again to the Islamabad airport in an attempt to fly to Skardu, only to have the flight cancelled two days in a row; and finally with GRACE chief executive Khadim Hussain on a 24-hour bus ride from Rawalpindi to Skardu, through Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan provinces.

When I arrived in the breathtaking Skardu valley,





“

I saw a country where education was highly valued and human resources were needed to further the momentum toward education in the communities



I knew this long journey was well worth the time and effort.

I first connected with GRACE Association Pakistan in 2007 through the UN Online Volunteering Program. At the time, GRACE was seeking help writing a proposal for early childhood development programming in Skardu. Through this opportunity, I learned about the community of Skardu and the surrounding areas.

When Khadim first asked me to visit in 2008, I was concerned about the security situation there, because the American news media was reporting only on the violent episodes in Pakistan. However, through talking with people like Khadim, and through researching education in Pakistan while working at the Brookings Institution, a different picture began to emerge.



I saw a country where education was highly valued and human resources were needed to further the momentum toward education in the communities. I learned that, just as in America, there were areas that were less safe and areas that were very safe. I was even told by a colleague who had visited Skardu that it would be more secure there than in many parts of my home of Washington, DC. I realised the media had painted an inaccurate picture of Pakistan, and Americans would continue to believe these inaccuracies if they had no access to real information.



In January 2011, I decided it was time to start planning my trip to Pakistan and Skardu. Khadim enlisted the help of Shamshad Hussain of GRACE to assist with my visa application. The US Department of State had issued a travel advisory against any non-essential travel to Pakistan for American citizens. However, the work that GRACE is doing is so essential to improving the lives of the children and families in Pakistan, that I decided this was an essential trip.



I took steps to blend into Pakistani culture not because I felt it was required, but out of respect for the customs, and in turn I received respect from people I met

I also took steps to blend into Pakistani culture, including wearing shalwar kamiz and covering my head with a dupatta (hijab). I did this not because I felt it was required, but in respect for the customs and in turn I received respect from the people I met.

Reading *The Voice of Grassroots* and following GRACE on the website and Facebook, I had an idea of the work the organisation was doing in Skardu. However, meeting the people behind the work and seeing the evidence in the field, I realised there was much more to the story.

GRACE Association plays a prominent role in the community, and its leaders have a tremendous amount of social and political capital in the region. These relationships ensure that projects are aligned with community needs and completed satisfactorily.

My own background is in early childhood development, and the primary purpose of my visit was to develop the capacity of the teachers at GRACE Public School Skardu. I spent the first day observing the teachers, and I found that the relationships between students and teachers, and among students, were very strong. Children feel comfortable coming to the teachers with questions and the teachers are dedicated and willing to try new strategies in their work.

The next day I facilitated a workshop on enriching learning experiences. We talked about providing learning experiences that incorporated a variety of learning styles (seeing, listening, doing, touching, moving, etc.). During this workshop, the GRACE Public School Skardu teachers, principal Mr Raza, and Khadim developed a vision for high-quality primary education, and we discussed the pathways to achieving that vision.

Next, we planned a series of activities for small groups of children in the nursery and prep classrooms (children aged three to five years), taught by Ms Fatima, Ms Samreen, and Ms Naznin. We incorporated teacher-developed materials such as letter and picture cards, and recycled materials such as bottle caps for learning counting, sorting, and patterning.

On Thursday, we launched the new activities, and while it was a lot of work, teachers noted that the children were very interested in learning and that they were “learning through playing.” Later that day, Mr Raza, Ms Samreen, Ms Fatima, Ms Naznin and I went shopping with Khadim and Mr Qasim of GRACE Association to buy materials to promote learning and bins in which to organise them.

Finally, on Friday we worked on organising the classroom and said goodbye.

While in Skardu, I also had the opportunity to deliver a presentation to the English ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program students. This program is an initiative funded by the US Department of State and coordinated by Shamshad. My presentation was titled, “Career counselling and opportunities for higher education in the USA,” and I spoke about the higher education system in general and my own experiences.

The students were a very bright and motivated group and all had ambitious career aspirations. They saw English as an important step in meeting their career goals, as many opportunities for higher education in Pakistan are taught in the English medium.

I also had the pleasure of visiting Kwardu Valley and Muntzarabad, the home of the GRACE founders and the birthplace of the powerful grassroots movement

“

Our online volunteers are taking their contributions to GRACE a step further, becoming on-site volunteers in Pakistan



that began here in 1992. There I had the opportunity to visit several schools and sample traditional Balti foods in the home of Khadim and his family.

Flying back from Skardu to Islamabad, I was sad to leave this beautiful place and my new friends. However, I am already planning to come back in 2012. In the meantime, Khadim and I are planning several efforts to sustain this work while I am back in the USA.

First, I will be conducting live trainings for the GRACE Public School Skardu teachers and leadership via Skype, which will be projected onto a screen in the school.



We are also considering establishing a non-profit organisation in the United States to replicate the successful behavioural change communication and grassroots community empowerment model worldwide.

Overall, my visit to Baltistan was incredible. While I had known that the Balti people were recognised for their hospitality, I was unprepared for what that really meant. Throughout my visit, I was invited into people's homes for tea after just meeting them; provided with handmade gifts from students; received daily text messages with inspiring words from my new friends; and most importantly, formed lifelong friendships.



The students and citizens of this region are full of hope and ambition for their futures, but are in need of technical support and resources to help them achieve this vision of excellence. I am hopeful that through continued collaboration, the GRACE staff, partners, and volunteers can make this vision a reality.



# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS



## Donor

USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP)

## Funds available

- Small Grants of under \$250,000 (2 to 3-year project)
- Ambassador's Fund \$100,000 (1-year project)

## Deadline

Not specified

## Funding Objective

The US Embassy Islamabad announced it will provide Rs4.28 billion (\$50 million) through the two programs that will be used to fund as many as 350 grants to qualified organisations to improve community services delivery in Pakistan. Among other activities, these grants will be used to help improve municipal services, advocate for gender equality, and increase transparency in local governance.

The Ambassador's Fund will support up to 250 community-developed self-help projects, each lasting up to one year. Recipients are encouraged to contribute at least 25 per cent of total project resource requirements. Grants generally will not exceed Rs8.5 million (\$100,000), but may be larger.

The US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Small Grants Program will provide longer-term awards to organisations that submit unique and innovative ideas to promote development efforts.

Grants of under Rs21.4 million (\$250,000) will be provided for projects lasting for up to three years.

"These two funds give our embassy flexible mechanisms to support community and grass-roots projects," US Ambassador Anne W. Patterson said.

National Rural Support Program (NRSP) has been awarded the contract to implement the Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP).

## Contact information

To learn more, phone the NRSP at (92) 51 282 2319, send an email to [applications.sgafp@nrsp.org.pk](mailto:applications.sgafp@nrsp.org.pk), or visit the SGAFP website at [www.sgafp.org.pk](http://www.sgafp.org.pk).



## Donor

UNDP's Equator Prize 2012

## Funds available

25 recipients of the biennial

Equator Prize 2012 will each receive \$5,000 (USD), with 10 selected for special recognition and a total of \$20,000 (USD).

Representatives of winning communities will participate in the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), in Brazil in June, 2012.

## Deadline

October 31, 2011

## Funding Objective

The Equator Initiative is a partnership that brings together the United Nations, governments, civil society, businesses and grassroots organisations to build the capacity and raise the profile of local efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustain-

able use of biodiversity.

The Equator Initiative has announced the call for nominations for the Equator Prize 2012, which will recognise 25 outstanding local initiatives that are working to advance sustainable development solutions for people, nature and resilient communities.

Nominations are accepted in 16 languages from local initiatives in 146 countries including Pakistan.

#### **Contact information**

For more information and to apply visit <http://equatorinitiative.org/>



#### **Donor**

Commonwealth Foundation

#### **Funds available**

Civil Society Responsive Grants and Commonwealth Association Annual Grants - Applications

#### **Deadline**

Civil Society Responsive Grants are awarded on a quarterly basis. Applications should be submitted by June 30, September 30, December 31 or March 31. Commonwealth Association Annual Grants are awarded for each financial year, and applications must be submitted by December 31 the previous year.

#### **Funding objective**

The Commonwealth Foundation gives almost a million pounds a year in grant funding to non-government organisations - including community, research,

labour, faith-based and cultural groups - working in areas corresponding to its programs.

The grants enable people from developing countries to organise and take part in activities such as conferences, seminars, workshops, exchanges, study visits and festivals.

They allow people to learn from and be inspired by one another.

Applicants usually have national reach, grassroots support and existing relations with government.

#### **Contact information**

For more information and to apply visit [www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com)

# GET INVOLVED!

Donate

Volunteer

Take  
action!



## **Make a donation**

GRACE relies on the generosity of individuals and private foundations to give the lifelong gift of literacy to children in our country. If you would like to support our efforts to better equip our future generations towards development of Pakistan please make a contribution today.

## **Volunteer**

Volunteering is a great way to be a part of GRACE's work. As a grassroots organisation it is the commitment and support of volunteers around the world who have helped us achieve what we have today in changing and improving the lives of impoverished and neglected communities of northern Pakistan.

Take action!





**GRACE  
ASSOCIATION  
PAKISTAN**

**The grassroots  
association  
for community  
empowerment**

# THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2011

**Registered Office Islamabad**

27 - E 3rd Floor, Office 5,  
Ali Plaza, Fazal-e-Haq Road,  
Blue Area  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
Phone +92-51-282-9970, 252-9683  
Fax +92-51-2829971  
Email [grace@grace.org.pk](mailto:grace@grace.org.pk)  
Web [www.grace.org.pk](http://www.grace.org.pk)

**Programme Office Skardu,  
Gilgit-Baltistan**

Main Airport Road Astana Skardu  
GPO Skardu 16100, Pakistan  
Phone +92-5831-455067  
Fax +92-5831-455067  
Email [grace@grace.org.pk](mailto:grace@grace.org.pk)  
Web [www.grace.org.pk](http://www.grace.org.pk)

**Project Office Karachi,  
Sindh province**

House No. 566 Block "Q" (Balti Basti)  
North Nazimabad, Karachi  
Phone +92-21-6058821  
Email [grace@grace.org.pk](mailto:grace@grace.org.pk)  
Web [www.grace.org.pk](http://www.grace.org.pk)

**Project Office Layyah,  
Punjab province**

Bhagal, Chak 279, TDA  
Layyah, Punjab, Pakistan  
Phone +92-606-450279  
Email [grace@grace.org.pk](mailto:grace@grace.org.pk)  
Web [www.grace.org.pk](http://www.grace.org.pk)