

THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2010

January - December 2010

GRACE Public
School Skardu has
been awarded the
2-year English
ACCESS Program
USA grant



2010 FLOOD DISASTER RESPONSE

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The Voice of Grassroots

01/2010 | January-December 2010

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EDITORIAL

A Voice for Social Justice and Democracy



The 2010 has been both busy and exciting for GRACE Association Pakistan as we celebrate the successful implementation of several development projects in our grassroots communities.

GRACE Association played a key role in resolving many burning socio-economic issues within our target com-

munities. These problems include children unable to attend school, the poor, displaced people (due to war, natural disasters etc), people with disabilities (PWDs), landless people and vulnerable youth.

Among the highlights of the past year have been: The provision of inclusive primary education in the GRACE Public School for hundreds of children from poor families.

In addition to the GRACE public school, and in collaboration with local communities and our own members, we have provided free primary school places for 20 of the most deserving girls and children with disabilities.

With financial assistance from the Government of Japan, we were able to provide safe drinking water and sanitation as well as health and hygiene education to almost 13,000 displaced and native families in Astana Skardu.

We succeeded in signing a 2-year contract with the US Embassy in Islamabad to provide English access to 80 teenagers from disadvantaged communities.

Our community volunteers have been fully involved in rescue, relief and now redevelopment activities for victims of the 2010 floods that devastated so much of Pakistan.

GRACE Association received a Grassroots Initiative Program (GRIP) project award from the 'One UN' Joint Program on Environment for introducing a sustainable model of natural resource management and climate change mitigation at grassroots level.

We organized the International Day for People with Disabilities on 3 December. We were able to distribute winter relief items to the 353 most vulnerable flood victims in Qumrah and Kharko villages of Skardu Baltistan in collaboration with the Australian High Commission in Islamabad.

We perpetually seek the full protection and blessings of Allah the Almighty in prayers and proactive good deeds to move forward in faith, love, charity and service.

Looking to the future, we have plans to promote primary education, early childhood care and development services, the establishment of community school networks.

At the same time we will continue to collaborate with and support women health workers and Peoples Primary Health Care Initiatives, Pakistan for mother and child health care services and family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention measures.

We are also looking forward to enhancing our skills in providing services for the community-based rehabilitation of people with disabilities, homeless people, women and the elderly.



In 2010 we played a key
role in solving burning
socio-economic challenges
within our communities

The vision and mission that drive GRACE Association are both clear and shared. They ensure that we are in close contact with real-world events and that our commitment remains strong and purposeful. We are also keen to help other communities and replicate in their villages the successes that we have seen in ours.

These include environmental protection projects, community organization techniques, change adaptation initiatives, livelihood enterprises and voluntary service networks dedicated to welfare and development.

Indeed, I wish we could replicate them to promote peace and development throughout the whole country. We can accomplish little by ourselves, but I am sure that together we can achieve much.

If you are acquainted with individuals or organizations who you think we should be collaborating with, or if you know anyone who could join us as a community development professional, please, please put them in touch with GRACE Association!

Together, with your continuing support, we will make 2011 not only a time in which grassroots community development issues find durable solutions, but also the year that we make great advances in ensuring that the grassroots development profession is stronger, more capable and more respected than ever before.

The partnership between this organization and its stakeholder community has been the key to success. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my personal thanks to our supporters, volunteers, board members and general members for their continuous support and guidance to run the Organization and keeping it on the track to achieve its burning objectives.

I wish you a happy and peaceful 2011!

Khadim Hussain

Founder and Chief Executive

ABOUT GRACE

The Grassroots Association for Community Empowerment is a non-profit organization (NPO) registered in Pakistan under the Companies' Ordinance, 1984. It developed out of an indigenous organization established in 1992.

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

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 the basis of equality, to promote a sustainable, equitable prosperous, and peaceful society.

Mission: GRACE endeavours to empower and improve the quality of life of the country's marginalized and vulnerable communities through welfare, participatory research and development, capacity building, promoting 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 and rules and regulations) for its institutional norms and programmatic operations.

Strategic principles and interventions: The Organization's programmes adhere to the strategic principles of social mobilization, volunteerism, advocacy, human rights, partnership building and networking.

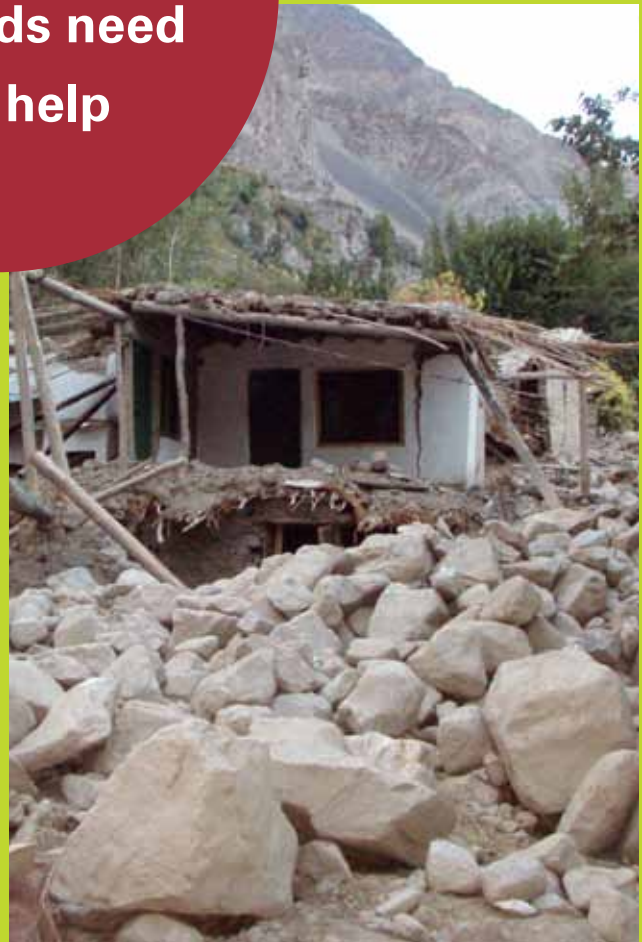
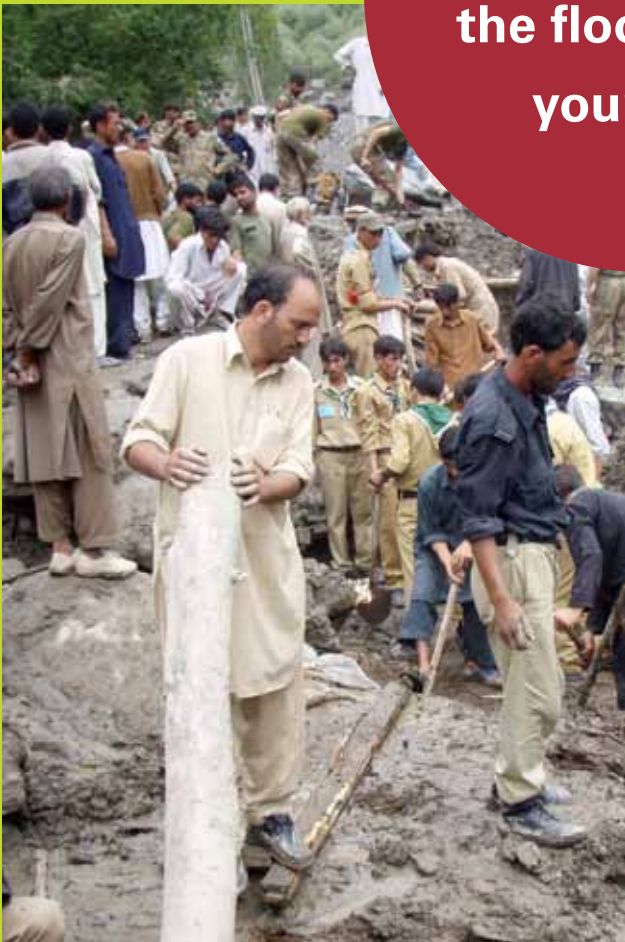
The conceptual designs and the implementation framework of all the programmes and projects follow a set of strategic interventions, including: education and awareness, human and institutional development (HID), equitable community development, participatory planning and implementation, gender and diversity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



Our core values are
social justice, equity
and democracy



**People directly
affected by
the floods need
your help**



JULY 2010 FLOOD DISASTER

As was widely reported worldwide, July 2010 saw the start of unprecedented floods in the northern parts of Pakistan following heavy monsoon rains in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Current estimates indicate that the floods claimed the lives of at least 1100 people died with the homes of more than two million others either destroyed.

The United Nations estimates that more than 21 million people are injured or homeless as a result of the flooding, exceeding the combined total of individuals affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Approximately 1/5 of Pakistan's total land area was under water due to the flooding.

GRACE's Response

GRACE's dedicated staff, enthusiastic volunteers and a network of supporters have mobilized to assist in flood relief efforts in Skardu, Baltistan and North East Pakistan.

The Skardu and Ganche districts of Gilgit-Baltistan have been hit by devastating floods, the region's worst deluge in 80 years. At least 55 people, including women and children, have died in the Qumra area and the Talis village at Ganche.

Four villages have been totally washed away in Baltistan and bodies recovered from rubble under mud avalanches. Roads and bridges have also been cut, and landslides are increasing the isolation of affected areas. Houses are buried in mud and rocks, properties have been destroyed, and cattle lost.

Bad weather has made it impossible for rescue teams to reach the affected areas. To make things worse, the monsoon rains show little sign of subsiding



Unprecedented floods hit the northern parts of Pakistan following heavy monsoon rains in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh provinces

GRACE is making a desperate call for help with a report explaining the extent of the damage, what is needed, and how you can help. You may find the report from our website:

www.grace.org.pk/reports/

How can you help?

Contact	Wazir Shamshad Hussain GRACE Association Pakistan
Phone	+92 300 470 8813
Account Nr.	1001321
Bank name	MCB Bank Limited
Bank address	Abpara Market Branch 0597, Hameed Chamber, Islamabad
Bank telegraphic address	MUSCAP BANK

Please also consider donating to other organizations involved in relief activities as well.

Thank you!

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

International Day for Persons with Disabilities Joint celebrations of Grace Association Pakistan and PPHI Skardu

*By Muhammad Qasim, Skardu
December 3, 2010*

GRACE Association Pakistan and Peoples Primary Health care Initiative (PPHI) Skardu organized a joint Awareness Walk from GRACE Public School to Radio Pakistan Skardu. Mr. Arqam Tariq, Deputy Commissioner for the Skardu district, other heads of district administration, media representatives, Wazir Shamshad Hussain, program coordinator GRACE Association Pakistan, Kacho Basharat Hussain, manager PPHI Skardu,

members and volunteers and staff of GRACE Association, students from different schools and many community peoples joined people with disabilities (PWDs) participating in the walk.

Addressing the awareness rally, the Deputy Commissioner acknowledged the organizers of the Disability Day, saying that it is highly important to raise public awareness on the issue of human rights of people with disabilities and help create an enabling environment for them to participate in society. He assured full cooperation with the organizations GRACE Association and PPHI, working on disability in the Skardu district.

Also addressing walk participants



Skardu Deputy Commissioner Arqam Tariq (left) and Kacho Basharat Hussain (right)

was Wazir Shamshad Hussain, who reminded the banner-carrying gathering that disability is not so much an affliction of the individual, but rather of society.

Calling for a change in behaviour towards people with disabilities, Mr. Hussain encouraged society as a whole to create a friendly environment for people with disabilities. He mentioned GRACE Association's endeavours, especially the inclusive education and English ACCESS programmes for people with disabilities in mainstream education system.

Sharing his views on the occasion, Kacho Basharat Hussain said that the day was an opportunity for all to redouble efforts to secure the rights of people with disabilities in the area. PPHI work is in the prevention of diseases that cause disability. So far we are serving the region with a special focus on polio through the EPI programme.



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The goal of the English Access Microscholarship Program is to connect gifted students with the global marketplace and through it, to the world

Representing people with disabilities, Mr Muhammad Ali (himself disabled) demanded that government and other development actors include people with disabilities in the development process. He thanked GRACE Association and PPHI for organizing the rally, and handed down a challenge for authorities to implement the 2% employment quota as guaranteed in the nation's constitution. He also requested that civil society organizations develop skills for people with disabilities in order for them to find work participate more fully in society.

The International Day for People with Disabilities was an outstanding success in all respect and gained further attention as a result of being broadcast by national and local TV networks.

Launch of the English Access Micro Scholarship Programme ACCESS to English Language, Cultural Understanding and Personal Development for Economically Disadvantaged Adolescents in Skardu

Muhammad Nazir Aziz, Islamabad April 6, 2010

GRACE Association Pakistan is proud to announce that GRACE Public School Skardu has been



accepted as one of the service providers for the 2010-2012 English Access Microscholarship Program sponsored by the United States Department of State.

In response to the growing demand for English language in international and national communication, GRACE Association Pakistan will implement a 2-year Access Programme in underprivileged rural and urban areas of Gilgit-Baltistan.

GRACE Chief Executive, Mr Khadim Hussain, and Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Islamabad, Mr Larry Schwartz, signed an agreement on Tuesday, April 6, 2010 to run the English ACCESS Micro scholarship Programme

at GRACE Public School Skardu for the next two years. The goal of the programme is to prepare gifted students in both written and spoken English, so that they can be more easily integrated into the global marketplace and have access to the world.

Programme Implementation
Mr Shamshad Hussain, GRACE Association Pakistan Programme Coordinator, will be the ACCESS Coordinator at the GRACE Public School Skardu, providing education for 40 male and 40 female students in the 14-16 age range.

Students will be streamed into separate English Access classes held after normal school hours. Four qualified instructors have



The Japan-funded Water Supply project aims at improving the life of displaced population, women and children in particular

been brought in and they will be responsible for delivering and managing these classes over the next two years.

Project Period

Two years: from April 15, 2010 to April 14, 2012

- Recruitment and selection of project staff
- Final agreements with selected schools

Pre-implementation phase

March 14-April 14, 2010

- Selection of student candidates
- Recruitment and selection of project staff
- Final agreements with selected schools

Project implementation

April 15, 2010 – April 14, 2012:

- English language teaching programme
- Enhancement activities programme
- Personal development programme
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, support, coordination and reporting activities

Project consolidation and closure

April 2012

- Course completion and graduation
- Final project report and financial

report

- Impact assessment report

Self-Enhancement and Career Progression Activities

The following activities will be included in the Programme for the self-enhancement and career progression of students:

- Comprehension
- Reading
- Writing
- Conversation
- Improving Vocabulary + Spelling
- Bee Competition
- Handwriting improvement
- Test Preparation
- Essay Competition

Certificate of Award and Completion

Participation and completion of the two year ACCESS Program will respectively be recorded in the form of certificate for successful students, signed by the US Ambassador to Pakistan.

Completion by GRACE of Japan-funded Water Supply Project, Astana Skardu

The Government of Japan Development Assistance program has granted GRACE funding of more than US\$90,000 for a project with the specific title, 'Female Social Empowerment through 4 Kilome-

tres Potable Water Supply for Displaced People in Astana Skardu'. The agreement, funded under the umbrella of 'Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects', was signed in the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on November 4, 2009.

The project aims to improve the quality of life of the displaced population, particularly women and children, by providing clean drinking water to all 12,750 affected people in target villages of Astana Bala, Paeen, Brolmo Colony and Gultary Colony.

The project commenced in November 2009 and was completed on July 31st, 2010. GRACE Association deployed its staff and volunteers from the Skardu programme of-fice, while the target communities provided labourers, land and local materials.

The project objectives were



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The Water Project has contributed to the empowerment of women by mobilizing them in water management committees



achieved by the installation of 4 kilometres of mains water pipeline to supply the entire population of all four villages. The provision of a doorstep supply of safe drinking water has reduced at a stroke the workload of women and girls, who until now typically spend 5-6 hours every day bringing home water on foot from far away.

Furthermore, the project has contributed to the social empowerment of women by mobilizing them in water management committees and enhancing their participation in socioeconomic development activities of the society.

Additional outcomes of the project include an increased awareness and involvement of women in home-based economic activities and an increased school enrolment among girls. Looking further into the future, we also expect a positive impact in female literacy, societal participation and em-

powerment among women. The arrival of safe drinking water has also improved the general health of the communities, reducing the incidence of waterborne, infant mortality and related morbidity occurrences.

GRACE's endeavours have also resulted in the development of links between the Public Works Department (PWD) and target communities, one result of which has been a move by the government to provided water supply operators to monitor the main water tank. As regards communities, a fixed tariff system has been introduced to fund continuing water project operations in each of the target villages.

GRACE Association intends organizing an official inauguration in coordination with the donor and stakeholder communities in the near future.

GRACE's Team Visit to FJEC Kohat

On May 1st, 2010 the GRACE Management Team comprising Khadim Hussain, Dr. Tehmina and Shamshad Hussain, visited Fatima Jinnah Educational Complex (FJEC) located in Kohat. The visit was arranged by Adnan Khan, Execu-

tive Director, FJEC, and following a recommendation from GRACE, US-based Online Volunteer Ms. Jennifer Wells, to finalize the strategic plan for FJEC.

Mr Adnan warmly received the team at Muhammad Nagar Chowk, Kohat where he guided them to FJEC, located at the main Pindi Kohat Road. This is an urban area, which falls in a 5-10 km radius of the surrounding rural communities of Kohat.

We held an informal meeting with Mr Adnan, Shah Sab (a supporter of Mr Adnan in the community and his former teacher), Ms. Sadia (schoolteacher), and Mr Nauman, the Assistant in charge of FJEC. We discussed FJEC and the role it will play in the overall development of the communities in Kohat.

During our visit, we noticed that the school environment is located in a safe and easily accessible location for students while remaining clear of the main road.

Dr. Tehmina, an active GRACE volunteer and qualified development professional, accompanied the GRACE team to review the strategic plan documents and evaluate their relevance to the full study and assessments of the needs of the communities in the area.



GRACE Volunteers were the first team to reach victims with rescue and relief support in the worse hit flood areas



She suggested GRACE and Mr Adnan collaborate and move ahead together until the time when Mr Adnan's NGO is registered and able to mobilize resources independently.

Mr Adnan identified the following school issues:

1. The school has sufficient rooms, but is located amid the hustle and bustle of a busy market. The team suggested that the school be moved to a quieter rented house that will be more conducive to a learning environment.

2. Assess the needs and strategize a plan to provide these services.

3. Mr Adnan Khan currently has full responsibility of all financial and human resource needs. The team recommended devising a plan to raise revenue and re-evaluate the

policy of providing free education to selected students who have performed well.

4. Develop linkages and collaborations with other organizations serving in Kohat as well as in the province and at the national level to pool resources for FJEC. GRACE can also be one of the organizations to collaborate and move ahead to achieve mutual objectives.

5. Register the FJEC as a non-profit organization/charity as soon as possible and organize and create roots in communities for mobilizing indigenous human as well as financial resources for FJEC.

GRACE team members greatly appreciate Mr Adnan's will, optimism and dedication to serve his communities in Kohat. The team members also expressed appreciation for the generosity and hospitality exhibited by the lunch he hosted at Shelter Hotel.

GRACE's flood response

By Nisar Hussain

While much of the international coverage of flooding centred in northern parts of Pakistan, southern areas, including Sindh Province, continue to suffer also from

flood devastation.

GRACE Association Pakistan is helping the flood victims in the northern parts, Skardu and Ganche Baltistan, reaching out to more than 400 affected people in five mountainous villages in Baltistan.

Besides other relief activities, the GRACE Team has provided psychosocial care and treatment to families, in particular the most vulnerable in society: people with illnesses, pregnant women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

GRACE is playing a major role in resource mobilization for the victims by making appeals to the government, civilian and other supporting organizations to assist effectively in meeting the immediate needs of those affected by the floods. Medical camps have been set up by the Government in Shot, Oro and Talis and in inaccessible villages including Qumra, Bondu and Kharko, providing life-saving medicine and professional medical support.

GRACE Volunteers were the first team to reach victims with rescue and relief support in the worst hit villages of Qumra and Talis. So far, four relief camps have been set up and 7,000 people provided

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More must be done. People need warm clothes, shelter and food for the winter



Haji Muhammad Ali, another victim told our field team, “People are desperately waiting for help. The promised packages might reach us sometime in next few years, but in the meantime what will we do, how can we survive with our women and children in the tents?”

In addition, for months now local people travelling between Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad and other cities have had to do so on foot owing to the blockage of the Karakoram Highway. No vehicles can go to the market, leaving the mobile phone as the sole remaining form of reliable communication. There, major shortages of food and fuel in the local market, and these additional economic difficulties coming on top of flood damage has only served to increase levels of depression among the general public.



but we have to get relief items to the target villages before winter, which is both harsh and lengthy in Gilgit-Baltistan. Although water starts to freeze by mid October, flood victims have no shelter from these extreme weather conditions. Local relief organizations and communities not as badly hit by the disaster have provided food, while the government has distributed tents. While these efforts have been greatly appreciated, they are only temporary solutions.



with food and medical care. We are giving special attention to the needs of the elderly, people with disabilities, women and children, in particular girls.

We plan to reach many people across Pakistan in the near future,

More must be done. The indigenous people will need warm clothes, shelter and nutrition for these coming months. During the assessment interviews, a flood victim expressed both gratitude and concern when he said to the GRACE Team, “Thank you for providing food and soap, but we cannot survive in these tents in the winter.”

GRACE is conducting a detailed survey to assess the rehabilitation and recovery needs of those affected in villages in Baltistan. (available at www.grace.org.pk) The initial survey report reveals that the restoration of a traditional drinking water system and irrigation water channels are the top priorities. The same water that brought misery and destruction is also the lifeblood of the villages. Without water they cannot recover.

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Community elders expressed appreciation for GRACE's efforts to include all children in the Eid holiday celebrations

GRACE's volunteers celebrated EID-UL-FITR with flood victims in Skardu, Baltistan

By Muhammad Yaqoub
Skardu, Sept 11, 2010



GRACE Association Pakistan distributed relief and Eid gift packages among flood-affected people in Qumra and other villages in Gilgit-Baltistan.

GRACE Team distributed Eid-ul-Fitr gifts to 39 families who were celebrating Eid in their tents. The gift packages included clothes for men and women, children's toys, biscuits and food.

Speaking on the occasion, GRACE Programme and Flood Relief Coordinator Mr Shamshad Hussain noted that the scale of disaster was so huge that neither the government nor any other single organization would be able to cope. "There is a dire need for everybody to play their part and help," he announced.

Talking to people in the relief camp in Shot village, GRACE coordinator Mr Muhammad Qasim expressed sympathy at the distress of flood victims and committed the Organization to assist in any way it can.

GRACE offered nine-year-old Nahida Batool, the sole survivor of the floods, free education at GRACE Public School. Free admission was also granted to other affected children.

The community elders expressed appreciation for GRACE Association's efforts to let the children celebrate the Eid holidays in light of all the distress they have incurred since the floods turned their world upside down.

GRACE's female volunteers eagerly participated and made their own contribution to the relief activities, proving that humanitarian assistance has no gender boundaries, with women willing and able to play a valuable and vital role in the re-development of communities, especially at critical times.

Their presence had a particularly positive effect on the morale of young girls and mothers and helped to relieve some of the daily tensions. The presence of volunteers is always uplifting to these victims, and it is heartening to see

people selfless commit themselves to improving the lives of others.

GRACE Receives GRIP Project Award

Islamabad, October 15, 2010



On October 14, 2010, the Pakistan Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration with 'One UN', provided \$1.2 million to fund 24 environmental projects relating to solid waste management and sanitation, community-based natural resource management and grass-roots climate change mitigation initiatives. GRACE Association is proud to announce that its project to develop a model for sustainable management of natural resources and climate change mitigation through community participation was one of the 24 awardees out of 450 project proposals throughout the country.

Chief Executive of GRACE Association, Mr Khadim Hussain, received the project award from the Federal

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The Grassroots Initiative Program (GRIP) fund, a sustainable development project supported by the U.N. and the government of Pakistan, was awarded to GRACE, among other NGOs

Minister for the Environment, Ha-meed Ullah Jan. Afridi. The Grass Roots Initiative Program (GRIP), a joint effort of the Ministry of the Environment and the UN, aims at developing an inclusive common platform of key partners to connect policies, projects and actions by government, aid agencies, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector into an agreed sustainable development framework.

Addressing the launching ceremony, Mr Afridi said that the increasing rate of environmental degradation around the globe has contributed to the unprecedented floods that have resulted in huge destruction across Pakistan. Further, the Minister stressed that the results of increasing damage to the environment would not stop, but rather would further hit the country in the form of food insecurity, community displacement and economic deprivation. Mr Afridi said that there is a need of grassroots environmental actions that could bring substantial improvements to the environment with the dividend including poverty reduction, employment generation and livelihood improvement.

In his address, the UNDP Country Director, Toshihiro Tanaka, said that the UN was committed to support both governments and societ-

ies in terms of projects aimed at improving vulnerable segments of the society, especially women. He said the GRIP programmes would give local communities their own voice in policy making on issues that affect them.

GRACE's GRIP project

GRACE's project is expected to result in further community mobilization, institutional strengthening for sustainable management of natural resources and climate change mitigation (CCM). It is envisioned that the community-based model of CCM will be set up by promoting solar water harvesting, water conservation, and agro forestry techniques. In addition, the project will promote non-timber forest product based enterprises (NTFP) and other appropriate energy efficient technologies relating to CCM.

The primary beneficiaries of our project are the target village communities in district Skardu. Women are expected to be the major beneficiaries, as they will play a vital role in the sustainable use of natural resources. GRACE's team also believes that the benefits of this project will have spillover effects on the neighbouring villages that will be influenced and encouraged to replicate this model. Overall, the line departments, visitors to the project areas, policy

makers, researchers, other users of environmental information and the private sector will benefit from implementation of this project.

Report inter-schools debate competition

Shamshad Hussain

Skardu, October 16th, 2010



To develop public speaking skills and foster intellectual growth in the youth of Skardu, GRACE English Access Program organized a one day Inter-school Debate Competition at Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu.

To ensure a rich education, communication between teachers and students is highly encouraged. The freedom to think and speak develops the power to reason and creates a level of tolerance. One learns how to put forward an opinion in a civilized and polite manner and how to respect and value others' opinions with patience and modesty.

“

Topics of the debate were the role of youth in society and English language as a key to future success

GRACE Association Pakistan, in collaboration with the US Embassy in Islamabad, is responding to the growing demand for English to be used in national and international communication by implementing a 2-year Access Program at GRACE Public School in Skardu for adolescents from economically disadvantaged families.



In all schools, student and teacher mutual understanding lays the groundwork for personality enrichment, confidence building and academic growth.

GRACE Association organized a one-day inter-schools debating competition on 16 October 2010 at Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu, as part of its enhancement activities which include speech in English, Drama and National Song competitions among nine schools students.

Educators and alumni from the Gilgit-Baltistan Fulbright Chapter were invited to attend the function as guests of honour. They reported that they were impressed with the performances and acknowledged GRACE Association and the US Embassy for organizing the event and providing financial and technical support.

We were pleased that the function

attracted a diverse audience and was not just limited to students. In addition, the audience expressed appreciation for GRACE's efforts to fulfil educational needs in the area by collaborating with the US Embassy in Islamabad to bring the two-year scholarship programme into being.

All school children participating in the competition showed themselves to be well prepared, highly organized and equipped with the skills and knowledge to speak on the various topics and perform verbal sketches and national songs.

Topics chosen for debate were: The role of youth the society and English language – a key to future success

In delivering their speeches the competing students declaimed that ours is an age of discovery and dreams. They said that the entire world is looking to them to be-

come a technical generation. They view young people as a source of talent with the potential to generate enormous profit in the future. If our youth work hard, commit to their studies, and learn to work with others they are capable of improving the political landscape of the nation and hold it accountable to the needs of the misrepresented and neglected.

Pakistani youth has the power to transform their country from a developing nation into a developed one. "Is it a dream?" No, emphatically not.

The verbal sketch theme was 'The use and misuse of cell phones'. Mobile phones were intended primarily to be used as a kind of security device to help when emergencies arise: a means of maintaining contact in a time of need. Along with all these advantages, many drawbacks also come with excessive mobile phone

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In student's and teacher's understanding lay the foundations for confidence and academic growth



reliance. In the realm of education, the negative effects are the distraction that phones exert on students' academic concentration and performance. Often mobile phones are the reason behind students becoming distracted in class, wasting time that should be set aside to complete school assignments diligently. Therefore, when one needs to study, mobile phones must be used responsibly, properly and only at the discretion

of the teachers and parents. This issue was discussed through a sketch prepared by the students. Overall, their performance was entertaining and convincing.

The following ACCESS students participated and represented their schools:

- **GROUP 1: Speech Debate Competitions** 1. Rubina Ehsan; 2. Ehsan Ali
- **GROUP 2: Sketch Competition** 1. Wajida Batoo, Rabia, Nazneen; 2. Nusrat Ejaz; 3. Ishrat Fatima; 4. Iqbal Hussain; 5. Furman Ali; 6. M. Saleem; 7. Wajid Ali; 8. Rajab Ali; 9. Abbas Ali; 10. Shahid Hussain; 11. M. Hasnain; 12. Sajid Ali
- **GROUP 3: National Song Competition** 1. Anila Maryam; 2. Jannat Bagum; 3. Rubina Naz; 4. Sobia Ali, Urooj Fatima

The following students were awarded prizes:

- **Speech Competition** 1st place: Mr Zeeshan of Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu; 2nd place: Rubina Ehsan, English Access Program GRACE Public School, Skardu
- **Skit Competition** 1st place: Ms Anila Maryam and companions, English Access Program GRACE Public School Skardu Zeeshan

of Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu; 2nd place: Ms. Sobia and companions, Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu

• **National Song Competition**

1st place: Ms Wajidah and companions, English Access Program GRACE Public School Skardu Zeeshan of Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu; 2nd place: Mr. Awais and companions, Baltistan Higher Secondary School, Skardu

Judging the events were: Mr. Mushtaq Javeria, Pakistani/American citizen; Mr. Ghulam Hassan Hasrat, Director Allama Iqbal Open University, Regional Office, Baltistan, and Mr. Muhammad Bashir, Government Social Welfare Office, Skardu.

Chief Guests, Mr Mushtaq Javeria and Mr Ghulam Hassan Hasrat, congratulated GRACE Association and the US Embassy for organizing such an inspiring event.

Wazir Shamshad Hussain, Programme Coordinator GRACE English Access Program welcomed and thanked the distinguished guests, students and all participants. He also thanked Mr Muhammad for hosting the event.

DREAM IS POWER

PORTRAITS OF COURAGE: SANA IQBAL AND MUHAMMAD BABAR SHAHZAD



GRACE Association was honoured that Mr Muhammad Babar Shahzad and his wife, Ms. Sana Iqbal, both agreed to share details of their personal struggles that they encounter due to their visual impairments. GRACE staff members applaud both of these individuals' commitment to the struggle for respect and inclusion of disabled people in Pakistan and its communities, and learn from their positive outlook that their condition is not a disability, rather a trait that they will not stop them achieving their goals. Sana's story highlights her thirst for learning and how she did not allow the loss of her eyesight to discourage her from continuing her education. Muhammad speaks about how he has dedicated all aspects of his life to improving the quality of life and opportunities for disabled individuals and that Sana has assisted in him achieving this.

Sana's story

My mother is a very personable, loving and courageous lady who has always been a great guide for me in all matters. I can never forget the contribution of my affectionate father towards my education. After he died, I found myself depressed and apathetic. Fortunately, my mother, who herself was greatly stunned

by her sudden loss, encouraged me to come out of the murky gloom that my life had become.

I was partially sighted at birth. When I was five years old, an operation on my right eye resulted in the complete loss of my sight. My elder sister had a similar experience, and my parents were already somewhat experienced in caring for a visually impaired child.

In 1993, I was sent to Government Middle School for Blind Girls: Shamsabad, Rawalpindi-Pakistan. My sister, who was already studying there, helped me to become well adjusted to the school environment and I learned English and Urdu Braille reading and writing within a very short time. I took an active part in co-curricular activities organized by the institute.

In 2000, I passed my Middle Standard exams with the best results of all the special education institutes in the Punjab Province. Subsequently, the President of Pakistan awarded me a shield. I then enrolled in the Government Higher Secondary Girls School, which was situated in my hometown of Haripur. I stepped into an entirely new environment. I was to mingle with the sighted and their view of me (mostly

discouraging with just a few wonderful exceptions). However, rather than fall into despondency, I felt myself grow more confident. I began to work harder and more enthusiastically to pass my matriculation. I was rewarded for all my hard work when, in 2002, I passed the matriculation exam with a high score. Acknowledging my achievement, the elected District Nazim (Administrator) presented me a certificate of outstanding performance. After that, I was admitted into the Government Girls Degree College in Haripur, again securing good marks in 2004.

Fulfilling my requests, my family honoured me with the gift of a computer and put me under the tutelage of a visually impaired person qualified and knowledgeable in the field of informatics. Now, I can operate my computer, surf the Internet, work with word processors, email clients, use multi-media programs, etc. In 2006, I succeeded in obtaining a Bachelors of Arts degree, and in 2007, I entered a Masters degree program. I majored in Sociology at the University of Peshawar-Pakistan. During my Masters, I conducted research into the learning difficulties of the visually impaired in special education centres. This research involved extensive fieldwork. Finally, in 2009, I was awarded my Masters degree with distinctive.

Babar's story

I am a blind individual who has experienced discrimination as people have stereotyped me, and lived secluded from society for 3 years, entertaining no hope for a future. With the help of family, I managed not only to triumph over those hardships but also to become self-sufficient and am now proudly and happily married to a blind woman, Sana Iqbal. I completed by Masters of Science in Anthropology from a reputable university in my country, and have presented my research papers in various international conferences. During the earthquake in 2005 I worked with various national and international relief agencies.

After completion of my Masters degree (with excellent marks, I may add), I began searching for employment. Following job interviews I was often rejected on grounds of 'disability'. On another occasion, I had to travel abroad for a presentation, and the local office refused to issue my passport, explaining that since I was blind, I could not be allowed to travel alone. After a lengthy argument, however, they relented. These experiences have only served to strengthen me; I finally joined an earthquake relief organization where I had the opportunity to interact directly with victims.



We have long dreamed of helping fellow disabled people. Training was essential to accomplish this goal

Throughout my career, I have always enjoyed overcoming whatever challenges come my way. Many of my talented acquaintances, especially people with disabilities (PWDs), have been denied equality in terms of socio-economic standing and I could only help a fraction of those. Today, I don't have any particular difficulty in life, but I aspire to innovate and create ways through which my fellow PWDs in Pakistan will be able to become a useful, contributing section of society rather than objects of pity who are only perceived as deserving of charity and handouts.

I have long dreamt of helping fellow disabled people and after getting married I came to know that my wife shared the same vision, specifically of sharing her triumphs and tribulations to provide inspiration to women with disabilities.

Sana and Babar's path to change

We both are committed to helping PWDs. But how? And what kind of help should we extend? It was important that we both gained the skills and knowledge to be productive in our mission. Not only did we turn to study the social sciences, we also worked to improve our public speaking, fundraising, project management and many other practical skills.

A friend informed us of the training offered by the International Institute for Social Entrepreneurs (IISE), where we both applied and were selected. Our dreams of empowering PWDs of Pakistan may not have been possible had it not been for this life-changing opportunity. During our training in IISE, we gained extensive social entrepreneurship skills and the knowledge to initiate and manage projects across various social sectors.

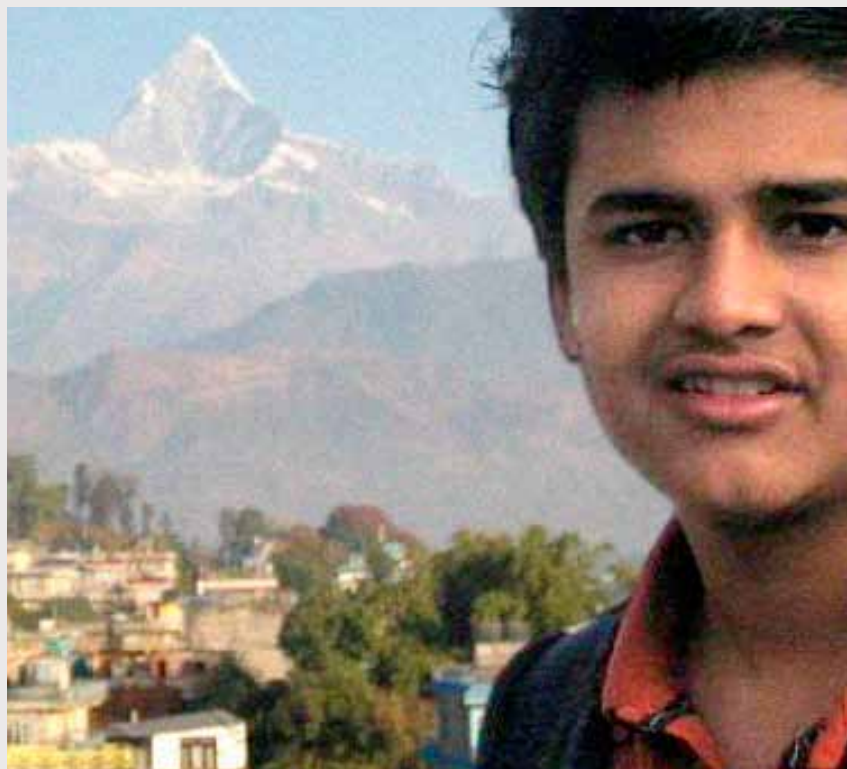
VOLUNTEERING AT GRACE

ROHAN CHALIS, NEPAL, ONLINE VOLUNTEER

During my early childhood, I had the opportunity to live in and experience different rural parts of Nepal. I have always enjoyed whatever comfort and luxury I wanted. I slowly grew up in that environment and became aware of the differences separating me from people living in these villages. In the cold weather, with temperatures averaging -18 degrees (C), whereas I was warm and comfortable, I could see that children the same age as me did not possess even a single piece of cloth. As I grew older, I learned and gained more experience. I discovered that it is immoral to discriminate against people because they have a different colour, religion, language or nationality. For me the only religion is humanity. So, I decided to volunteer, not only for the benefit of my country, but for the good of the whole world.

I believe that everyone is the same in this world, but that man has imposed his own special emphases on religion, nationality and gender. I decided to do something about this and devoted myself for the needy and poor. I have always believed that each individual has the power to change the world and that one needs to lead by example.

My involvement came when entire provinces of our neighbour,



Pakistan, became inundated with floods in 2010. Life has always been difficult in the remote northern parts of Pakistan, and these floods only brought new problems.



Many people lost their lives and there were huge infrastructure and property losses. News reports made me sad and I wanted to help in any way possible. I was already a United Nation Online Volunteer, and I applied to GRACE Association as an online volunteer.

I was fortunate enough to be selected and I hope I have been of help to them.

GRACE Association Pakistan is among the few committed and dedicated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country. It has been helping the needy and uplifting the lives of several hundred people for more than a decade and a half.

The grassroots' development and positive action sets GRACE apart from the other NGOs involved in Pakistan. I joined the family of

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I discovered that it is immoral to discriminate against people because they have a different colour, religion, language or nationality. For me the only religion is humanity

GRACE and assisted in whatever way possible from my side.



Volunteering for GRACE has overall been a great learning experience. As

an online volunteer, my main duty is to convince, attract and communicate with potential donors. We use modern social media techniques such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace. I created an online network of more than 50,000 people in GRACE's Facebook group. Some other volunteers were working hard on Twitter and MySpace.

We also uploaded insightful pictures and stories relevant to GRACE's flood relief efforts and other projects focused in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. We received positive and encouraging feedback and comments from individuals around the globe.

We also contacted various donors personally, providing information of ways they could donate or assist GRACE further.

As the team leader of Online volunteers it was my duty to coordi-

nate and monitor the work of each volunteer. While we were not able to win the Global Giving Competition, we gained life-long experiences that will equip us for future successes.

There were many challenges to be faced as part of our volunteer commitment. The image of Pakistan internationally has been tainted with recent news of terrorism and religious extremism.

In addition, many in the global community have adopted preconceived, negative notions about Pakistan and Muslims in general. It has been an important part of my work to emphasize that is unjust and wrong to judge a whole nation of people based on the selfish acts of a few.

The resultant lack of trust and sympathy towards Pakistan, not to mention concerns about corruption, have made it difficult to convince many in the international community to donate and assist in this critical time which affects not just Pakistanis and Muslims, but humanity as a whole.

To face this challenge the volunteers collaborated with GRACE to conduct various international awareness programmes aimed at sharing Pakistan's diverse and

beautiful culture and people, as well as many other attractive features about the land that are often ignored by the media. By highlighting and bringing to the surface the natural beauty and charm of this hospitable nation, slowly the image becomes clearer, allowing individuals around the world to set aside differences and realize the ties that bind, say, a child living in Africa or North America with one in Pakistan.

I am not bound by colour, nationality, religion or gender. If I had wings, I would have reached every corner of the world in order to help anyone who is in pain. If I can give happiness to someone even for a second, to me that is the greatest reward.

In conclusion, it is true that whatever we do cannot change the structure of the universe, but it can surely change the lives of a few people. Let us accept that the most important thing transcending religion, nationality and colour is humanity itself.

It is a curious, but true, paradox that in helping others we find ourselves. The power of giving is the way to find God. For this reason, it has been both a fulfilling and amazing learning experience working with GRACE.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS



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

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

Deadline: Not specified

Funding Objective: The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad announced that it will provide Rs 4.28 billion (\$50 million) through the two programmes. These monies will be used to fund as many as 350 grants to qualified organizations to improve community service 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 percent of total project resource requirements. Grants generally will not exceed Rs 8.5 million (\$100,000).

The US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Small Grants Program will provide longer-term awards to organizations that submit unique and innovative ideas to promote development efforts. Grants of under Rs 21.4 million (\$250,000) will be provided for projects lasting up to three years.

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

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

Contact information

To learn more, contact the NRSP at (92) 51 282 2319, or email: applications.sgafp@nrsp.org.pk, or visit the SGAFP website at <http://www.sgafp.org.pk>.



Donor: Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights KIOS

Funds available: No set limit.

Deadline: Open

Funding Objective: To strengthen and protect the rights of the most disadvantaged groups. Special consideration is given to the promotion of human rights of women, children, minorities and the poor.

The principle is summarised in the KIOS motto: "Human Rights for the Most Vulnerable." The work of KIOS is based on values of justice and equality. The work is guided by principles of reliability, independence, commitment and quality." KIOS is currently accepting applications from only a limited set of focus countries in its target regions (South Asia and Eastern Africa). KIOS registers applications only from the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Uganda.

Contact information

Please check the website: http://www.kios.fi/english/project_funding/

FLOOD RELIEF VOLUNTEERING

MICHELLE KHILJI, ISLAMABAD

From August 2010 until now, I have been volunteering informally assisting with flood relief efforts in the northern regions of Pakistan with the community-service-based organization Future Leaders of Pakistan (FLP), where I have assisted the group with distributing food, clean water, clothing, toys and shoes for women and children. In addition, I had conducted surveys of the damage in several flood-devastated villages throughout the northern districts of Pakistan (Charsadda and Nowshera). Since October 2010, I joined GRACE Association Pakistan as the Communication and Fundraising Officer. Presently, I assist GRACE with drafting proposals for rehabilitation projects to be funded by multilateral aid agencies.

What I have learnt from these experiences in the Pakistani context, is that the government is ill equipped to provide even essential public services, let alone mitigating the effects of large-scale natural disasters. This is because of the government's lack of accountability which leads most people (especially the affluent) to evade taxes. As a result, civil society has started to step in to provide services of their own, but which should be the domain of the government. This has proven to be a mixed blessing. While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like GRACE can partially alleviate the harsh realities of poverty in the short term it perpetuates the cycle of ill-equipped and under-resourced government, a lack of credibility in them on the part of the population, and thus dependence on NGOs and international assistance.

The government and NGOs have acted in their own ways to provide food, water, and clothing. However, this kind of relief has only ever been perceived as temporary and inconsistent. A lot of work still needs to be done. Agricultural land has to be levelled, water courses repaired, silt and debris removed, schools,

health centres, roads, bridges, culverts fixed and people's livelihoods restored. While NGOs, philanthropists and international disaster relief organizations have been instrumental in relief work, the bulk of reconstruction is the responsibility of the state.

Need for International-Domestic Collaboration

Michael Kugelman, Program Associate of the Asia Program of the Washington, DC-based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, is responsible for publications and research on South Asia. In Kugelman's recent publication "International Responses to Pakistan's Water Crisis: Opportunities and Challenges," he argues that while the international community has been generous in providing aid towards Pakistan's recovery and rehabilitation, it is vital that a balance is maintained between domestic and international responses. I believe that this balance is to keep both sides honest in this bargain, especially to deter an over-reliance on the foreign community to rid Pakistan of its troubles that derive from the lack of a credible and functioning government.

Overall, international responses should be accepted as complements and not substitutions to indigenous efforts. While the US government prefers to work with Pakistani government agencies with the rationale that public institutions are better equipped to manage large infusions of capital this will not improve US aid delivery to Pakistan, the reality is that the Pakistani state has repeatedly failed to provide basic services to its population. The US and other foreign governments must diversify its aid partners in Pakistan.

It is time to give a chance to new domestic players who have unique and fresh strategies to tackle the multi-dimensional obstacles to Pakistan's recovery and sustainable development.

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GRACE endeavours to empower and improve the quality of life of the marginalized 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

MY OBSERVATIONS

TAHIREH SHIRAZI, VOLUNTEER



I am a Pakistani American and have lived in Los Angeles, California for the past 25 years. I travelled extensively throughout Pakistan while growing up there, but spent my young adult life in Karachi where my father settled after retirement.

Over the years in LA, I developed an interest in hiking through our local mountains, which subsequently led me to become a trekker in the high mountains of Pakistan. In the summer of 2005, I trekked for two weeks in the Deosai plains to Burgi La and in the foothills of Nanga Parbat to Mazeno La. The first of many such wonderful weeks spent trekking in northern Pakistan brought me into close contact with these mountain communities, leaving a lasting impression and affinity.

After the earthquake of October that same year my interest in Pakistan's north was no longer solely to trek in its mountains, but also give something back to the communities that had given these trekking experiences so much pleasure and meaning.

Along with a trekking partner and close friend from Los Angeles, Kamila Jeevanjee, we became involved with SCIPPER – a Los Angeles-based non-profit

organisation that has been addressing the medical needs of paralyzed survivors of the earthquake. Our contribution to their effort has been focused towards building homes for people left disabled due to spinal cord injuries. Our purpose of fundraising for this endeavour has been twofold. Not only to raise funds for the house building effort, but also to make Pakistan's spectacular mountain scenery come to life for western audiences, not just mountaineers. We have achieved this by showing slides of our treks, encouraging audiences to visit and trek in Pakistan, dispelling notions of a landscape characterised by inhospitable terrains and scary people, which has become a dominant perception, particularly among women's activities.

Alongside our trek slides we have exhibited and sold quilts made by Pakistan's urban poor, injured, bed-ridden women in hospital and a group of quilters from Los Angeles to which I belong. This quilting effort has been another aspect of my connection with Pakistan's under-served. This has been my attempt to create a vocation from this centuries-old creative craft, using entirely recycled materials. Since Oct 2006, the sale of these quilts and our trek slides have helped build six homes in the earthquake-affected areas of Baagh, Muzaffarabad, Mansehra and Balakot.

Our efforts continue, but with a shift in focus. Our goal now is to house twenty of the women who are abandoned by their families and still languish at NIHD Islamabad and create an assisted living facility for them in a city with a major hospital - either Islamabad or Abbotabad. This too needs funding and partnerships in Pakistan - both of which we continue to look for.

As a gardener and a student of Permaculture, in conjunction with a two-month consultancy with AKCSP

(Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan) to design a community school garden in Shigar last autumn, I also taught a group of young women from Shigar valley the methods to design and landscape a garden. While training AKCSP/WSE (Women's Social Enterprise) interns the basic principles of landscape design, I lived for more than two months among the villagers.

The girls and I successfully realized the plans and handed them over to AKCSP/WSE last November. Due to a lack of funding, the plans have not been implemented yet, and the skills learned have not been put into practice. I continue to hope and work towards making it possible.

A filmmaker friend from Karachi, Mahera Omar, who spent a month in Shigar with me, made an excellent documentary about this work and recently submitted her film in an international film festival, currently competing with other very well made documentaries from across the Muslim world. Scheduled to culminate in Los Angeles in March 2011, prizewinners will be announced and the films screened at the Los Angeles Film School. Mahera's beautiful documentary opens a window into the lives of the remote Shigar valley and its brave and determined girls. It brings to light their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn and absorb from the world outside their small community. Mahera intends to donate any prize money that she might win, to be used as seed funds for starting the construction of the garden.

http://womensvoicesnow.org/watchfilm/a_garden_in_shigar/. We all wish her success.

On my return to Karachi from Shigar last December, a college friend and school principal, Saba Quadir, introduced me to GRACE Association and its work. She requested I get in touch with Khadim Hussain, to see if there was a way to implement the garden plans that the girls had so painstakingly worked on but come to a dead halt. Also to see if there was anything I could do for GRACE Association in Skardu.

In May of 2010, I was able to connect with Khadim in an effort to find an interested partner in building the facility in Islamabad for the SCI patients. I ended up working with him to set up a vocational centre in Skardu that will not only address the needs of people with disability primarily, but also integrate able and disabled members of society, male and female, into working together and learning in creative ways. To



People are hungry for education and health services

this end Khadim, Rehabilitation International (a New York-based NGO) and I have worked together to write a grant proposal. I hope that we will be successful in attracting funding for this unique vocational centre and that I will be able to help lay its foundations. It will be a crucial step towards creating job opportunities and integration into society for all.

The constant question asked of me, is whether I feel secure and safe working and travelling in the north. The answer to that lies in all that I have done both collectively with friends and family and alone travelling by bus from Rawalpindi to Kashgar on the Karakoram Highway. I have attended a wedding of a friend in Shimshal valley in the dead of winter and made detours to Skardu from Gilgit by bus. I have always felt safe and entirely comfortable, as the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have treated me with the utmost respect, kindness and hospitality.

Any turmoil currently in Pakistan cannot be gauged by visiting these areas of the country, particularly Baltistan. The area's beauty is not only stupendous, its people are peace loving, humble and generous, and any kind of visitor to this mostly untouched wonderland is made immensely welcome by all who live there.

From its borders with China in the north, to India in the east and Afghanistan in the west, all the way down along the Indus until it reaches the plains of the Punjab - to the intrepid traveller, there is no other place like Gilgit-Baltistan in the entire country. I would highly recommend not only trekking trips to these 'throne rooms of the mountain gods', but volunteer stints in these peaceful, immensely beautiful isolated towns and villages, hungry for a sound education for their children, good health practices and innovative ways to create livelihoods while maintaining their centuries-old traditional ways in the arts, agriculture, language and religion.

GET INVOLVED!

DONATE. VOLUNTEER



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 organization 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 VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 01/2010

GRACE TEAM
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THE BEST FOR
2011

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