

Report on Relief and Reconstruction Work in Earthquake Hit Areas in Kashmir

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Introduction

A much anticipated tragedy has been avoided to some extent in the areas where a devastating earthquake struck on 8th October 2005. With the help of many non government organizations, political and trade union organizations and ordinary people around the world, it was made possible that some sort of relief or shelter reached to effected areas of Kashmir and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. There has been no widespread illness seen or not much causality because of bad weather or non availability of medical support. Thanks to over 600 Cuban doctors who have helped over 600,000 cases during the last four months. Even general Musharaf has to praise the Cuban government several times.

The Labour Relief Campaign and many other organizations alike have played an important role in relief and rehabilitation work. Set up just a day after earthquake on 9th October 2005, LRC has managed to bring together the resources of many who had not much to contribute but wanted to do something..

Bringing together six workers organizations Women Workers Help Line, National Trade Union Federation, Labour Education Foundation, Pakistan Peasants Coordinating Committee, Progressive Youth Front And Labour Party Pakistan and their networks, LRC was able to construct 100 houses in one targeted area of Kashmir, brought relief items from food to medicine to over 60,000 people in two selected areas Paniola in Kashmir and Balakot in NWFP.

Over 23 trucks of relief items were sent to these areas. These trucks included items that were collected in our relief camps and also in our

networks. It also included items that were bought from the markets to suit the special requirements of the areas.

It was mainly our local contacts and set ups in the effected areas bases on the local communities that helped to have an effective distribution of the relief items. Labour Party Pakistan national chairperson Nisar Shah who originally comes from Kashmir but was settled in Karachi to practice Law was able to reach Kashmir on 9th October, a day after the earthquake. He was able to set up local committees to coo rdinate and take decisions regarding the relief and reconstruction work.

We initiated the formation of local committees from the very beginning and after some hesitation of the locals, it was general accepted and then the committees played an important role in our whole operation till now.

In the initial period, the main problems for many organizations were the distributions of the collected items. Many ended up leaving their collected items on the main roads in the effected valleys. Because of the local involvement, our items were mainly distributed through a li st and survey system that we managed in the very early stage. So it reached to most needed and in the areas where others were not able to reach before us.

Labour Relief Campaign also tried to expand it works by bringing new organizations and creating a new organization called Citizen Relief Campaign. The CRC brought many influential people in its fold who attended several meetings but it did not go very far. By creating a new organization, LRC did not dissolve itself but worked together with others.

The earth quack exposed the real anti people nature of Pakistani state. It was never ready for any such disaster. The military government had been spending over 40 percent of national annual budget on military expenditure but it had only 19 helicopters to cope the situation in 22000 kilometers of mountains and hilly area. When Indian government offered helicopters, it refused to accept them as well to maintain the so-called enmity with Indians.

The earthquake was also seen as manmade. The state was absolute not ready to deal with such a disaster. It reached many areas very late and much causality occurred because of that.

One of the main themes of the LRC was to highlight the issue of disaster management and the role of the state. LRC worked on both platforms one to provide immediate relief and rehabilitation needed in the effected areas and second to raise the political aspect of the issue in a wider spectrum.

Description of Area:

Background of the area: District Poonch is one of the important areas of Azad Kashmir on the political, geographical and socio-economic sectors. It has vast area on the map of the Kashmir. Its total population is 0.487 million. There are 29 union council for administrative breakup to run it

bitterly. Rawalakot city is the capital of the district to run the administration properly.

The earthquake disaster of October 8, 2005 has badly affected three districts of Azad Kashmir including Poonch, Bagh and Muzafarabad. The situation prevailed in all three districts after disaster were the same and people were badly affected. The loss are equal in three districts. District Rawalakot is one of the worse affected areas in this disaster. Although the casualties are less as compare to other areas but their houses were completely ruined. Total 43000 houses are badly damaged and not in living position and more than .2 million people were houseless and living in under open sky in hard winter.

Media Campaign:

To highlight the problems being faced by the people living in the earthquake effected areas and to create awareness in the general public and especially in the various organizations involved in the relief and reconstruction activities, a media campaign was launched. Another objective of this exercise was to compel the government to give attention to pressing problems being faced by the people.

Daily press releases were issued in Kashmir highlighting the main problems. After initial hesitation, the national media started taking our views seriously and were given a respectable coverage to our ideas.

Through this campaign, the unbearable conditions in which these earthquake victims are living were brought in the focus of the print media so that the people should get the real picture of the ground situation.

We were the first organization who pleaded that the tents would be of no use in the harsh and severe winter of this region. It was rightly advocated that we were going to face one of the serious but avoidable human tragedy in the near future if proper measures were not taken to arrange immediate shelter for the homeless population. The said point is that precious resources and time were spent for arranging tents. These tents were neither weather resistant nor water proof which the basic need was considering the climate of the area.

Another problem which was although highlighted but was not given due and necessary attention was the unjustifiable price hike which was hampering the reconstruction and the rehabilitation process. In this regard daily press releases were issued. We criticized the traders' mafia who were making money with both hands in this period also.

Fighting religious fundamentalism

One of the effects of LRC campaign was seen in total eradication of religious fundamentalist forces in our targeted area. These forces made good inroads in other earthquake affected areas as there was no alternative from

the progressive forces. But once an alternative to these forces had been seen by the local community in Kashmir area of Paniola, they opted to work with us. After four months of the earthquake, we have not seen any camps or offices of these religious fundamentalist forces in our targeted area. Even the main bourgeois parties of the area have to rely on us and praise the work in public again and again.

Medical Camps:

The people of earthquake hit areas facing great hardships and health related problems are increasing and getting worse new dimensions. The harsh weather is making their life even more miserable as the people are either living inappropriate and insufficient shelter or in the open air.

It is well known fact that in almost all the area the night temperatures goes minus 10 and over during the winter time. About 50% of the population of this whole area lives at more than 4,000 feet above the sea level. In these conditions, most of the people are prone to cold related diseases. Especially the children, women and the old age people are the main victims. Unfortunately, health has never been in issue to which the state in this country has ever given any attention even in normal conditions.

This state of affair has made the situation extremely difficult for the people as the state apparatus does not have the capacity to provide service to the people. In these circumstances it was and it is the need of the hour that the non- organizations and institutions should take part in this process. Keeping into considerations the insufficient resources of the organization medical camps were organized at various locations. The detail of the health services provided by LRC is given below.

Table

Sr. No.	Date	Location	Cost of medicines	No. of Beneficiaries
1.	28/10/05	Nakker	23,502.00	133
2.	29/10/05	Sarmila	19,900.00	129
3.	29/10/05	Jhola Nara	24,000.00	151
4.	30/10/05	Air Gali	17,100.00	84
5.	30/10/05	Chirooti	13,680.00	68
6.	31/10/05	Paniola	16,450.00	85
7.	27/11/05	Nakker	14,750.00	75
8.	27/11/05	Sarmila	17,000.00	77
9.	28/11/05	Chirooti	11,800.00	61
10.	28/11/05	Jhola Nara	22,600.00	139
Total	.	.	1,80,782.00	1,002

In these camps 7 doctors and 2 female nurses worked voluntarily. The transportation and logistic

cost is not included the above mentioned figures.

Relief and Reconstruction Activities:

The relief activities were started on the 11th of 2005 with distribution of tents, blankets and food items. In fact, it was the first relief activity in the area. It included distribution of various necessary items and construction of houses and shelters.

Construction:

For homeless and deserving families 50 houses and 50 shelters have been constructed mainly with the help of Action Aid Pakistan and Shirkat Ghah mainly. Shirkat Ghah is a radical woman NGO of Pakistan established in 1975.

Detail of Houses

S. No.	Villages	Number
1.	Nakker	27
2.	Jandala	9
3.	Chirooti	9
4.	Kumroota	5
Total	50	

Detail of Shelters

S. No.	Villages	Number
1.	Datote	8
2.	Air Gali	4
3.	Bhagiana	4
4.	Pak Gali	9
5.	Jandala	2
6.	Androot	1
7.	Bhinakha	3
8.	Sarmila	11
9.	.	.
10.	.	.
Total	50	

Criteria:

It was made sure that only those families should get benefit who most deserving and needful. For this purpose, defined criteria was that those families should be identified who do not have resources to reconstruct their houses. Also, widows and orphans were given due importance. Same was the

case with the distribution of goods. Its detail is given in the section of “The Economic Condition”.

Impact:

The impact of the all above mentioned activities is excellent. The main success achieved is that because of the construction of houses and shelters, other organizations started to realize this reality that tents are of no use and the provision of proper shelter is the only way through which earthquake victims can be helped out of this crisis. Also, the community is very much involved whose importance of involvement could be not ignored. For this purpose 17 different local community committees were formed who played their part in this process.

Difference:

The main difference between the relief activities of the other organizations and our working methodology is that even in the process of distribution of goods it was made sure that all the things should reach only to the most deserving families. It has been the common but the sad practice in the relief activities that all the items sent to the affected areas were distributed at the road side and easily accessible areas. Therefore, far flung and hard to reach areas were mostly ignored, and in some cases totally. Through this exercise it was made possible that people could raise their voices to get the attention they really deserve. In this process media campaign played its part.

The Economic Condition:

As discussed before most families of the identified locations (villages) belong to the low income group. This is the main reason why this area was targeted.

1. Nakker:

The following table shows the average family income, average family size and per capita income of the household.

Table

S. No.	Income Group	No. of Families	Average family Size	Average Family Income	Per Capita Income (Per month)
1.	No Income (Supported by Others)	1	6	Nil	Nil
2.	From Rs.2,000 (\$33) & Below	10	7	Rs.1,720.00	Rs.246.00 (\$4)
3.	Between Rs.2,000 & Rs.3,000	11	9	Rs.2,682.00	Rs.298.00 (\$5)
4.	Between Rs.3,001 & Rs.4,000	2	9	Rs.3,500.00	Rs.389.00 (\$6.6)

S. No.	Income Group	No. of Families	Average family Size	Average Family Income	Per Capita Income (Per month)
5.	Between Rs.4,001 & Rs.5,000	1	6	Rs.4,500.00	Rs.750.00 (\$12.5)
6.	Between Rs.5,001 & Rs.7,000	1	11	Rs.6,000.00	Rs.545.00 (\$9)
7.	Above Rs.7,000	1	14	Rs.8,000.00	Rs.727.00 (\$12.1)
Total	.	27	.	.	.

From the above table it can be seen that one family is being supported by other persons. This is the family of Abida Bagum who is the widow of late Abdul Aziz. One of his son has just recently left for Dubai to work as a labourer in the late September that is before the earthquake. He has managed to do so only after getting loan from various persons of the village. It is expected that his salary at most will be round about Rs.15,000.

Also one the family of Naseem Fatima (widow of Syed Mushtaq Shah) has the only income source of sewing clothes at home. She does so with an ordinary sewing machine. That is why her income is Rs.2, 500.00 (\$41.6) per month only. Her family size is 5 with 2 daughters and 2 sons. All her children are studying with one of her daughters studying in the college.

Most of the families selected have monthly income upto Rs.3, 000. Their number is 21 with 10 families having income less than Rs.2, 000 and the remaining 11 between Rs.2, 000 and Rs.3, 000. Similarly 2 families have income between Rs.3,000 and Rs4,000, one is in the income group of Rs.5,000 and Rs.7,000 and only one of the 27 families has income more than Rs.7,000 which is Rs.8,000. Now if we look at the average family income it ranges between Rs.1,720 to Rs.8,000. But 21 of these families have a monthly income which is between Rs.1,720 and Rs.2,682.

If we compare these families with the definition of the United Nations Organization of the poverty level, it is clear that all of these families are below the poverty line.

Sources of Income or Occupations:

The detail of various sources of income or occupation is given below.

Table

S. No.	Source of Income (Occupation)	No. of Families
1.	No source of Income (Supported by others)	1
2.	Mason	3
3.	Labourer	7
4.	Carpenter	1
5.	Tailoring (Female working at Home)	1
6.	Electrician	1
7.	Painter	1
8.	Driver/Conductor	2

S. No.	Source of Income (Occupation)	No. of Families
9.	Agriculture	1
10.	Ex Army man/Pension	3
11.	Private Job	4
12.	Government Job	3
Total	.	27

It can be seen from the above table that only 3 persons are government employees and 4 persons are engaged in private jobs. This means that remaining 20 families do not have any fixed income and that it may vary according to the various circumstances for example weather, inflation, business, socio-economic and socio- political conditions. They may be categorized as day labourers. The earthquake on 8th n of October 2005 has particularly affected these families as their homes with all their belongings have been destroyed persons working have to give attention to their families and reconstruct houses for their own.

It is interesting that there is a shortage of workers, whether or unskilled, in the reconstruction process. One may think that one should benefit in these circumstances so as to increase his earning but it should be kept in mind that the rehabilitation of their own families their own families is their top most priority so as to make it possible for themselves to survive in these vigorous conditions and they are involved in this process. The result is the shortage of manpower and because of it increase in daily wages of the workers.

One of the main features of this area is that because of the absences of any industry people have to work elsewhere to earn their livelihood, whether in Pakistan or abroad. But, people now leaving for Gulf States are not so well off as the wages in gulf have been decreasing drastically. This thing has especially heart Pakistanis and Kashmiris as they are mostly unskilled and the demand there is of skilled and highly educated and technical staff.

2- Jandala:

Now looking at the second of the identified locations which is Jandala, 9 houses have been built for different families. The table given below gives the detail of the economic condition of each of the beneficiary family.

Table

S. No.	Income Group	No. of Families	Average family Size	Average Family Income	Per Capita Income (Per Month)
1.	No Income (Supported by Others)	3	4	Nil	Nil
2.	Rs.2,000 & Below	1	8	Rs.2,000.00	Rs.250.00 (\$4.1)
3.	Between Rs.2,001 & Rs.3,000	3	6	Rs.2,830.00	Rs.472.00 (\$7.86)
4.	Between Rs.3,001 & Rs.4,000	1	7	Rs.4,000	Rs.571.00 (\$9.5)
5.	Between Rs.4,001 & Rs.5,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

S. No.	Income Group	No. of Families	Average family Size	Average Family Income	Per Capita Income (Per Month)
6.	Between Rs.5,001& Rs.7,000	1	6	6,000.00 Rs.	1,000.00 (\$16)
7.	Above Rs.7,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	.	9	.	.	.

Here in case of Jandala 3 out of 9 families are being supported by others as they do not have any source of income. All of these are widows.

One these widows (widow of Habib Khan), has lost her husband along with a son in the earthquake. The elder son of the other widow who is widow of Sabir Khan was working in a cable company in Chaklala Scheme Rawalpindi before the earthquake at the nominal salary of Rs.2,500. His age is about 20 years. But now because of the current crisis he is jobless and two his brothers are also have died in the earthquake.

The third family is of widow of Muzaffer Hussain Shah. Her husband had died because of a heart attack after a month of the earthquake. His house was completely destroyed by the earthquake. He was very much depressed because of the financial problems. The small tea stall, commonly known as chapper hotel and which was on the main Rawalpindi road in the same village, was also made rubble by the earthquake. This has left his family consisting of the mother and 4 children in a very miserable condition. All these children are less than 10 years old.

Of the remaining families 5 of them have their monthly income ranging between Rs.2,000 to Rs.4,000. Only 1 family of Nasser Khan S/O Afar Khan has an income of Rs.6, 000. He is employed by a multinational oil company as a driver.

Again with reference to the U.N.O. criteria of one dollar per person per day all these 9 families are living below the poverty line.

Sources of Income or Occupations:

Table

S. No.	Source of Income (Occupation)	No. of Families
1.	No Source (Supported by Others)	3
2.	Labourer	3
3.	Mason	1
4.	Taxi Driver	1
5.	Private Job (Driver)	1
Total	.	9

Here it can be seen that of the 6 families having any source of income all

the others are daily wagers. The only person does have private job. Neither of these families has living dependent upon agriculture or cattle farming, as is not being given importance as a source of income in this area. The chief reason is that most of the families have very small tracts of land.

Successes:

1 We are able to find a base on which we can continue this project in future. For example, 19 village committees have been established now.

2 This area is being ignored as the human losses in this area (Rawalakot) are comparatively low. All the organizations, whether governmental or non governmental, are focusing in the other disaster hit areas. By focusing here the needy population here is being targeted and in this way we are first to start the rehabilitation process here.

3 In the process the active members of the society are being involved in the relief and rehabilitation activities.

4 We have been able to identify those families who were economically so weak that they could not reconstruct their houses at their own.

Community Participation in Reconstruction:

Community has participated in housing project to accomplish this major housing reconstruction project before time. They are actively linked with our activities and contributed as labour. They provide us unskilled labour in reconstruction process with their own will. As we have selected those vulnerable families that have not easily accessible through roads and pathways. To access these remote areas, the community head loaded reconstruction materials to their reconstructed houses. They also provided woods used in their houses. For coordination the communities held regularly meetings to solve constraints confronted in the way of project and in these meetings community have actively participated. To accomplish this project with better way, our survey teams were assigned to identify the most affected poor and needy people. After identification we make village committee, to assist us in completion of these shelter homes and relief activities.

LRC Relief Disbursement Details

S. No	Commodities	Quantity	Donor	VILLAGE & UCs	Beneficiaries
1	CGI Sheets	700	Shirkat Gah, Labour Relief Campain	Pachoot, Bangoin	70 Families

S. No	Commodities	Quantity	Donor	VILLAGE & UCs	Benificiaries
2	Bedding Set	500	Shrkat Gah, Community Support Concern Lahore	Hurnamara, Pachoot, Bangoin	500 Individuals
3	Kitchen Set	300	Community Support Concern Lahore	Hurnamara, Pachoot, Bangoin	300
4	Food Items	For 800 families	Anjumanefalah Bahbood Checha watni	Hunamara	4000
5	Warm Clothes	For 1000 persons	Labour Relief Campain	Hurnamara Pachoot Bangoin	1000
6	Medicine	Rs 100000	Labour Relief Campain	Hunamara Pachoot	300
7	Jackets	1250	C S C Lahore	1250	
8	Tools	For 50 Famlies	Shirkat gat Labour Relief Campain	Hurnamara, Pachoot, Bangoin	300
9	Tents	150	Labour Relief camp	.	1000

Constraint and Hindrances:

We have faced tough constraints on routine basis in the execution of project but we solved it in a professional way. In such major constraints one is the satisfaction of community. Every one of the community were affected and all expected from us to reconstruct houses for them. But according to our criteria we focused the most deserving and female headed families. The neglected people has created problem for us but we solved all these problems through negotiations. In other problems the constant increased in the rate of reconstruction materials. The same way we have also faced problems like crucial shortage of cement blocks, CGI Sheets and increase in the fare of carriages. To accomplish this kind of big project in short time we have faced the shortage of skilled labour and permanent staff. This was very difficult for two people to monitor such like big project.

The pictorial View of the Project

[Pictures not visible here]

View of the earthquake destruction in District Poonch Rawalakot Azad kashmir

Collapsed house of village Nakar UC Bangion Rawalakot

Collapsed house of village Nakar UC Bangion Rawalakot

Collapsed house of village Kamrotta Bagiana UC Pachiot Rawalakot

Collapsed house of village Nakar UC Bangion Rawalakot

Discussion on the housing project with community

Meeting is under progress for execution of project

House of widow Nasseem Jan Village Ziarat Bazar Paniola Poonch in completion

House of Mohammad Khalil Village Kamroota Bagiana UC Pachiot

Completed House of M Azad Village Kamrrota Bagiana UC Pachiot

Family of widow Arif Shah village Nakar UC Bangion is living in house

Family of Fida Hussain village Chiroti UC Pachiot is living in house