

MEDICAL REHABILITATION OF THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED AREAS

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the earthquake a number of men, women and children have become physically disabled and require specialized medical attention and support. The disabilities following the earthquake include spinal cord injuries, amputations, fracture contractures and peripheral nerve lesions. Majority of the Spinal Cord Injuries resulted due to trapping of the people in falling structures.

In order to ensure comprehensive rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities, ERRA, with the technical assistance of World Health Organization (WHO) and

Project Cost : PKR 742.41 Million (GoP funding) Approved by ECNEC in November 2006 Project Components: Institutional Strengthening Community Based Rehabilitation Establishment of two 50 bedded Rehabilitation Centres Progress: No. of Beneficiaries				
<i>Physiotherapy Sessions</i>	<i>Occupational Therapy sessions</i>	<i>Prosthetic Devices</i>	<i>Orthotic Devices</i>	<i>Wheelchairs/ Crutches</i>
57,239	413	1,532	3,070	1,401

support of the National Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine (NIRM), Ministry of Health, has developed a project titled "Medical Rehabilitation for the Persons with Disabilities in Earthquake Affected Areas". The total cost of the project is PKR 742.41 Million and is funded by Government of Pakistan.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

- **Institutional Strengthening** of NIRM and DHQ Hospitals Mansehra, Battagram, Bagh and THQ Hospitals Balakot, Atthmuqam, Hattianbala. The objective of this component is to strengthen tertiary level health facilities to provide rehab services for the persons with disabilities (medical rehab equipment, physiotherapy and artificial limbs and support devices for amputees and paraplegics)
- Establishment of two 50 bedded sustainable **Rehabilitation Centres** providing Comprehensive Rehabilitative services in Muzaffarabad and Abbottabad
- **Community Based Rehabilitation:** This component will ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximise their physical and mental abilities, to access regular services and opportunities, and to become

active contributors to the community and society at large. Four Resource Information Centres are being established at Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Shangla and Mansehra. These RICs will mobilize awareness through Community Rehab Workers (CRWs) in the communities and family members to facilitate the persons with disabilities, impart trainings to PWDs to promote independent living skills, distribute assistive devices, promote the concept of inclusive education, and foster livelihood generation programmes.

- **Central Management Unit:** located in Islamabad this unit serves as a regulatory body to supervise, plan, coordinate and monitor the entire project in the earthquake affected areas

The project, which is in the implementation stage, ensures provision of comprehensive rehabilitation for People with Disabilities; and builds the capacity of PWDs, their families and the community to identify and manage disabilities. The project is in line with the ERRA Rehabilitation Strategy as approved by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on July 21, 2006.

Project Activities:

- Recruitment of project staff completed; 32 Community Rehab Workers and 03 Field Coordinators from 16 Union Councils of district Mansehra selected for the Community Based Rehabilitation Programme.
- Trained 46 CRW's and carried orientation of project staff in collaboration with PPAF; initiated technical training of the MO's and mid-level rehab staff in collaboration with AFIRM; developed and translated training curriculum into Urdu for CRWs.
- Held four IEC material committee meetings at CMU with all partner organizations, whereby responsibilities were distributed.
- Sites for construction of Rehabilitation Centres, RICs finalized.
- Awareness raising campaign launched and international Disability Day celebrated in collaboration with all the organizations working for the cause of disability at national level.
- Construction of pre-fabricated buildings awarded to URUMQI China; all essential office equipment for CMU purchased; and Tender for purchase of electro-medical equipment advertised.
- Operational plans prepared for field activities in Muzaffarabad and Mansehra and temporary hubs established at AIMS Hospital in Muzaffarabad and Helping Hand office Mansehra.

Major Achievements:

- Establishment of Central Management Unit (CMU) for conducting meetings of the partner organizations to plan, coordinate and devise mechanisms for effective and smooth functioning of activities.

- Preparation of the layout plan for Medical Rehabilitation Center (MRC) and Resource Information Center (RIC) at AIMS Hospital, Muzaffarabad finalized.
- Coordination and capacity building of the organizations working for disability in the affected areas carried out.
- MOU signed with Helping Hand (HH) for relief and development of joint field collaboration in 24 UCs of Muzaffarabad and Mansehra.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework discussed with all partners and physical verification of work reported by the partners started.
- Eleven out of 12 sites for the construction of MRC's, RIC's & BRU's finalized with the Provincial and State authorities.

SUCCESS STORIES (*Stories of Hope and Courage*)

1. **Salma Akhtar**, twenty three years old divorcee with a three year old daughter, got admitted at NIRM on 15 February 2006. On 8 October 2005, she was teaching children in Madrassa when the roof fell down on her and she was trapped in the rubble. Salma was rescued after 3 days and sent to DHQ Hospital Rawalpindi. She had suffered with spinal cord injury and was operated at DHQ Hospital and then she was shifted to NIRM for rehabilitation. At this time she was very depressed, in severe pain and unable to walk. Since then she has been under treatment at NIRM. At present she is not only able to walk on her own but is taking care of her daughter as well. She is committed to continue her profession of teaching Quran to the children.



2. **Rubina Bibi**, twenty two years old, fourth amongst seven siblings, got admitted here at NIRM on March 8, 2007. On 8 October 2005, she was at home on her bed when the earthquake hit. The roof fell down on her and as a result she suffered spinal cord injury and fractured her left leg. She remained under the building for ten minutes before she was rescued. She was first brought to CGH and then taken to PIMS where she stayed for six months before being referred to NIRM. At this time she was very depressed, had suicidal thoughts, her chronic pain was intolerable, she was totally dependant, and could do nothing on her own. Before long, at NIRM



she has recovered with the support of Medical officers, Psychologist and Physiotherapists. She recounts, ".....at NIRM the psychologists provided us moral support, encouragement, and the physiotherapist's enabled us to move independently without support. I can move more independently and confidently now." She has opened her arms for life with dignity once again.

Safia has also successfully accomplished training as a Community Rehabilitation Worker and become a useful citizen.



2. Sehrish Yasmeen is a 21 year old lady from Muzaffrabad, studying for a Bachelors degree. On 8 October, 2005, she was sitting in her room when the earthquake struck. She struggled between life and death for three hours before she was recovered from the rubble. As she suffered a Spinal Cord Injury, her sister died on the spot. She was initially brought to DHQ Hospital, Rawalpindi and later operated at PIMS Hospital, Islamabad. After being referred to NIRM as an 'Asia A' paraplegic, Yasmeen showed no sign of improvement during the first seven months of her treatment. However, with the help of medical officers, psychologists and physiotherapists her status changed from Asia A to Asia B. When she came to NIRM, she could not move any part of her body but now she can walk with support and the level of injury is L1.

She has been recruited as a Community Rehabilitation Worker at NIRM and now courageously takes care of other people like her. She won first prize in the Wheel Chair Racing Competition held at the National Institute of Health. Her high spirit reemphasizes Earnest Hemingway sayings, "*Man can be destroyed but can't be defeated*".



4. Safia Anyat is a 22 year old lady studying for her Bachelors degree. She was sitting in her college at Bagh, chatting with friends when the earthquake caused a wall to fall on her. She regained her senses at the Al-Shifa Hospital and discovered she had suffered Spinal Cord Injury. Life did not remain the same for her and the tragedy shook her physically, mentally and emotionally. According to Safia, her mind could accept the reality and she become solitary and suicidal. Since Safia has been brought to NIRM, she has recovered miraculously. The girl with a low self esteem now carries a shining smile on her face. She has normal appetite, no fear, no weeping spells and stable mood patterns. She is highly motivated and active in studies and extracurricular activities. The lady whose hands were immovable after the disaster now can do stitching, drawing and paintings.