



# Project to Assist ERRA and its Partners to Restore Livelihoods in the Earthquake Affected Areas of Pakistan

## Field Experience – Case Studies



### Project Title

#### Building a foot bridge improves accessibility

#### Project objectives

The aim is to rebuild a foot bridge to ensure a safe walkway for the village people and their livestock. Secondary goal is to enhance the accessibility of the village and livelihoods of the community.

#### Context

Mera Mengran village, on the bank of Neelum river and two and a half hours drive from Muzaffarabad, lies in close proximity to the epicentre. The earthquake killed 115 and destroyed three-fourths of the houses and other infrastructure. Twenty-five women headed households and eleven disabled further added to the vulnerability of the village.

The area is marred by deforestation and a fragile eco-system. Over grazing and anthropogenic effects acted as catalysts for active landslides and slips, which are the most common characteristics of the sub-watershed. To address the mobility issues of the village community, a wooden bridge forty-five feet long over Nalla Dogian at Takya Mera Mengran village, Heerkotli union council, Muzaffarabad district was constructed after it was identified through the Community Livelihoods Rehabilitation Plans (CLRP) process. In this process it was realized that building a secure walkway for the villagers was a priority need of the community. The activity was seen as a way to bring the community people together to jointly address some of the problems they were facing.

#### Population groups targeted

Village people belong to different clans and depend on subsistence farming and livestock rearing for their livelihoods. The earthquake impacted the natural resources significantly resulting in an increase in the flow of water downstream during monsoons thereby restricting the mobility of the villagers. It was therefore decided to construct the foot bridge benefitting some 200 households living in the village.

#### The project



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Community based organization and National Rural Support Programme worked together with District Rehabilitation Unit Muzaffarabad and the local government department facilitating the planning process and also assisting in the construction.

Member of the Village Development Organization (VDO) were directly involved in the intervention. They learned to build a low cost foot bridge with locally available material such as crush, sand and timber with a minimum use of cement and steel. Technical aspects and safety issues were considered when selecting the site for the bridge. In addition, a committee for maintenance was set-up for repairing and maintenance of the bridge. Remoteness of the area and financial limitations were the main factors due to which the issue was not addressed earlier on.



This case study is a part of a series of studies to document the experience gained implementing the *Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy* developed by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) of Pakistan as part of its response to the October 8, 2005 earthquake which hit the north of the country and killed over 78,000 people. The Strategy is implemented by ERRA, Government line-departments and Non-Governmental Organizations, with technical assistance provided through FAO using Sida funding.

### Building capacities

The planning and construction of the foot bridge and adding to the skills of the villagers directly involved in the activities was only one way of building their capacity. Indirectly, by engaging them in these kinds of activities, the village people become part of a forum where they exchanged experience and knowledge. This was not only limited to the topic of building bridges, but quickly spread to include other issues they felt to be important. With improved accessibility of the village one of the objectives of the activity, the village development organization members were also trained record keeping, team work, transparency and accountability and ownership and sustainability.

At the district and village level, the project involved a number of stakeholders such as District Rehabilitation Units, NGO partners, line agencies, members of legislative assembly and community based organizations. Community members took the lead in the overall financial management while the DRU and NGO staff facilitated the CLRP planning process from conception to implementation. In addition the engineers from NGOs besides technically assisting, also learned to plan and execute the activity within government parameters. Further, NGO staff was also able to understand the political dynamics of the area, bringing the local political leadership on board.

### Challenges

- ✓ Consensus building at planning stage
- ✓ Remote, difficult and fragile terrain leading to accessibility problems
- ✓ Project completion within stipulated time period and allocated funds

### Opportunities

- ✓ Strengthening capacity of partner
- ✓ Improves accessibility and mobility issues of the community people
- ✓ Cost saving with use of locally available material
- ✓ The foot bridge to positively



- ✓ Bureaucratic hurdles in the CLRP process and capacity of partner organizations impact the community livelihoods
- ✓ Duplication of the activity in other villages.

### Considerations for replication

The foot bridge enhanced the accessibility of the village, thus positively impacting the livelihoods of the community. It secured a safe pathway for the people and their livestock. The neighbouring villagers showed their interest in the indigenous knowledge and low cost technology for replication.

The experience described here can be successfully scaled-up/replicated under the following conditions:

- ✓ The building of wooden bridge is preceded by community group formation and capacity building (basic management, conflict resolution, etc) to ensure effective participation, ownership and sustainability
- ✓ The intervention is reflected in integrated and holistic planning and supported at district, provincial/state and national level.
- ✓ Through participatory approaches, beneficiaries are involved in all stages of project activities: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- ✓ One window operation, decentralized and delegated decision making at district level to speed up the process
- ✓ Minimize the different stages of approval process for the project to remove unnecessary delays in implementation
- ✓ Involve local political leadership, but not with delegated power of approval, as political considerations, if not always, most of the times obstruct transparency and merit
- ✓ Financial autonomy and authority to CBOs is prerequisite and ensure trust, ownership and sustainability

This case study received input from \_\_\_\_\_ and Piet Vochten.

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