

## **WOMEN DEVELOPMENT CENTERS**

As a consequence of the earthquake, women's roles have shifted, partly as a result of the loss of male partners. Women's responsibilities have increased as they assume the additional burdens of caring for orphaned children and persons with disabilities, and emerge as heads of households and decision makers. As the main bread earners of their household they require support on protection/legal matters and on taking up activities to generate income to support their families. Considering this, ERRA's Social Protection Cell felt an even greater need for the women to access economic and social opportunities in order to effectively care for their families.

The project involves construction of Women Development Centers and a pilot initiative on making markets work for women headed households in Muzaffarabad and Mansehra. ERRA has decided to offer financial support while the recurring expenses will remain the responsibility of MOWD and the land will be made available by the governments of AJK and NWFP.

The WDCs will offer support and services for women in distress (i.e. medical aid, legal aid, psychological counseling, etc.) and provide opportunities for sustainable income through the production and marketing of goods or services according to a market-based demand. The WDCs are envisioned to provide economic opportunities to the women and assist them in gaining sustainable livelihoods options.

Three different categories of building have been identified for the WDCs:

Category A: 25 rooms, accommodating up to 50 residents (3 centers)

Category B: 15 rooms, accommodating up to 30 residents (4 centers)

Category C: 10 rooms, accommodating up to 20 residents (1 centre)

WDCs and Social Welfare Complexes will preferably be constructed in the same compounds but the WDCs will be managed separately, with possible referrals for services from the WDC to the SWC and vice versa.

### **Services**

#### **Component A: Services for Women/Girls in Distress<sup>1</sup>**

Under this component support will be extended women in distress with 24 hour free services, including medical aid, legal aid, social and psychological counseling, investigation of cases of violence, establishing linkages with law enforcement agencies, rehabilitation through micro-finance and provision of interest free credit of up to PKR 15,000 per case (covered by MOWD recurrent budget). Secondly, refuge will be provided to women who require shelter for more than 24 hours and up to a maximum of 60 days. Additional

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<sup>1</sup> The WDCs will amalgamate the existing Darul Aman facilities, where these are presently available.

assistance may include referral to schools for accompanying children, and vocational training.

### Component B: Making Markets Work for Women Headed Households

Under this component, vulnerable woman, particularly widows, and women-headed households, will be ensured participation in sustainable income generation activities. Women will have access to skills training, micro-credit schemes, and business start-up and self-employment programs, including training in small business development and management, and referrals to vocational training programs/centers. These pilot initiatives will be based in the Women's Development Centers to be built in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad.

Under this component, a feasibility study will be conducted during the construction period of the WDCs and based on its results a full project proposal will be developed. The feasibility study will:

- Explore the opportunities and constraints for a multi-stakeholder program involving GoP, governments of NWFP & AJK, civil society organization's, private sector organizations, financial institutions, etc.
- Identify the products and/or services for which demand exists, building capacity to improve quality and production, as well as marketing the chosen goods or services.

### **Governance Structure**

The governance structures for the WDC will attempt to reflect the partnership arrangement for and contributions to this initiative among the following stakeholders: ERRA, MOWD, the Governments of AJK and NWFP, and civil society organizations. A Management Committee will be formed to supervise the activities of WDCs. Decisions related to hiring of staff, procurement and day to day activities will be carried out under the supervision of the Management Committee.

The project will be implemented initially for 3 years by the MOWD, thereafter, respective departments from province and state will assume the responsibility to continue the functioning of support services and programs for women and girls in distress from affected districts.