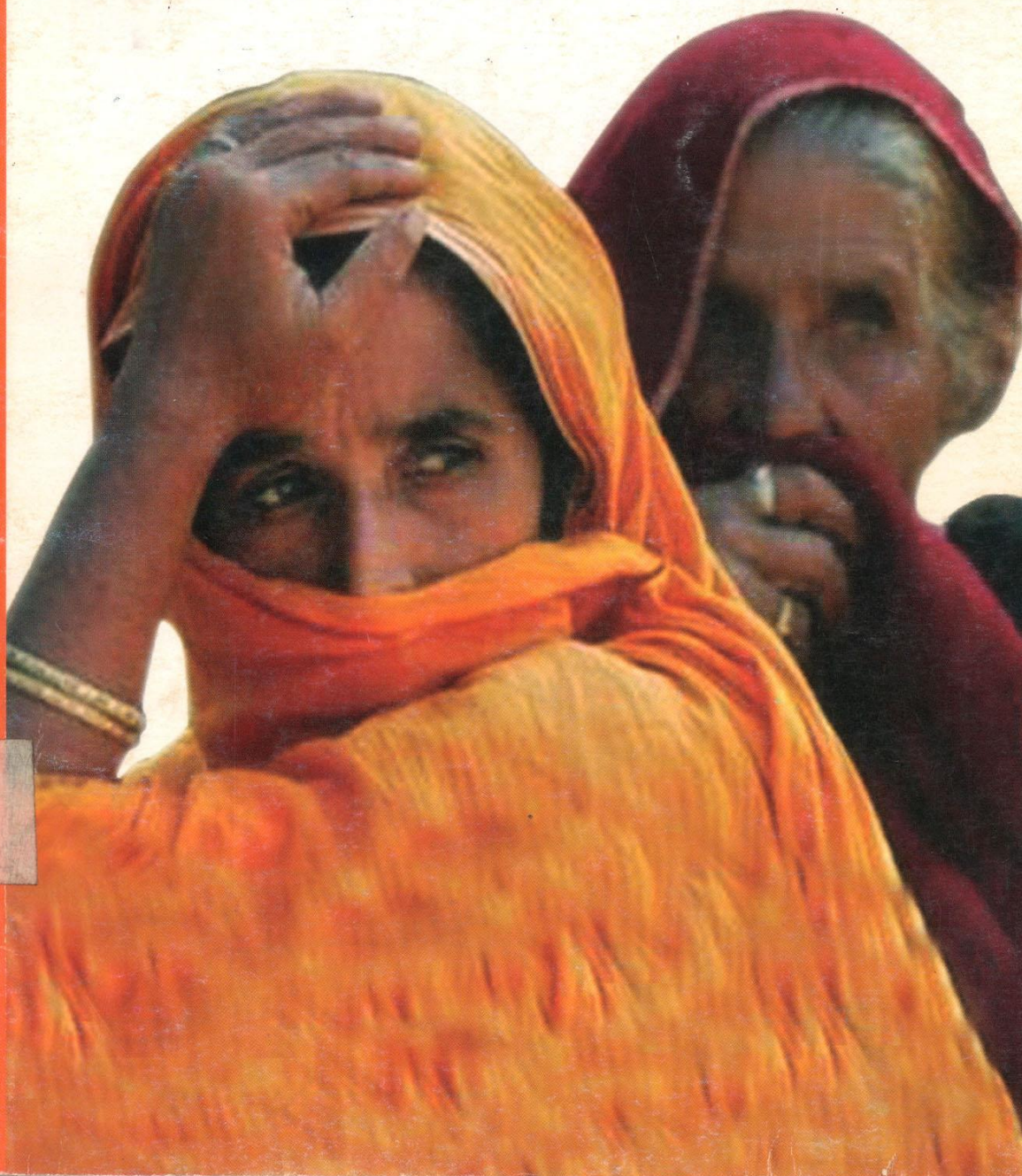


Earthquake Aftermath

Violations of Women's Human Rights
Pakistan



Earthquake Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in
Pakistan

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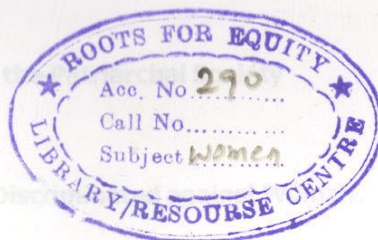
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Earthquake aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in Pakistan

Report of the Survey of Women's Human Rights
Violations in the aftermath of the October 8, 2005
Earthquake in Pakistan



Roots For Equity.

Roots for Equity
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Deveopment (APWLD)

ACRONYMS

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
NIC	national identity cards
NWFP	North Western Frontier Province, Pakistan

The exchange rate used in the report as of November 1, 2006:

1 USD = 59.12 Pakistan Rupees (Rs)



Roots For Equity

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FOREWORD

This report is part of the documentation project "Survey of Women's Human Rights Violations in the Aftermath of the Tsunami in India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka and the October 8, 2005 Earthquake in Pakistan" coordinated by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), a women's human rights network of over 140 members in 23 countries of Asia Pacific. This project developed in response to the calls for support from our members involved in relief operations in the aftermath of the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and their reports raising women's human rights concerns in Aceh province in Indonesia, Tamil Nadu in India, Sri Lanka and the Andaman coast of Thailand. When Azra Talat Sayeed, our member from Pakistan, reported about the impact of the earthquake on women, especially women headed households completely left out of relief assistance, the survey was expanded to document women's human rights violations in Northern Pakistan and Kashmir.

"Women and men experience the same hardships," replied Kofi Anan to a question on how the UN was addressing women's specific needs in the tsunami aftermath, at the press-conference during his visit to Jakarta in January 2005. There are a lot of people around the world, including aid workers, who believe that disasters, such as the tsunami, affect everyone equally and there is no need to focus on vulnerable groups, such as women, children, elderly, marginalised groups such as Dalits in India, migrants, religious and ethnic minorities and others.

Although gender disaggregated official statistics were not available in some of the affected countries, the Survey confirms the earlier observations that in Aceh, India and Sri Lanka more women died in the tsunami than men, almost 80% of the dead were women. The tsunami not only killed more women, it produced some very gender-specific after shocks, ranging from women giving birth in unsafe conditions to new forms of violence against women: forced recanalisation of women and "tsunami" marriages. In Thailand, women were discriminated even in death: the government assistance for funerals provided twice as much money for a man's death than for a woman's because men were regarded as heads of households and breadwinners. In Aceh, Indonesia, *ulamas'*, Islamic religious leaders, interpretation of women's disproportionately high death rates was that the tsunami was the God's curse on women for their immoral behaviour. As a result, the enforcement of Shariah Laws in post-tsunami Aceh became stricter with Shariah police beating women in the streets for not wearing headscarves. Similarly, in Pakistan women were blamed for invoking the earthquake as the God's curse for their sins.

The Survey findings confirm that women are more vulnerable during disasters as women, marginalised and disempowered under normal circumstances, are more at risk because of their lower socio-economic status, barriers to choice and lack of access to resources. With global warming and projections of increased natural disasters around the globe, it is imperative to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated in all disaster response interventions and strategies. Gender neutral disaster management results in discrimination and marginalisation of women because relief efforts rely on existing structures of resource distribution that reflect the patriarchal structure of society.

On behalf of APWLD, I would like to thank our members who conducted the Survey for their hard work and express my admiration for their commitment to the cause of protection

and promotion of women's human rights: Fatima Burnad and her team at Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement for their incessant fight for Dalit women's rights and against caste discrimination in India. TNDWM saved many Dalits from starvation when relief food was denied to them; Titi Soentoro and the team of Solidaritas Perempuan for their resilience and dedication. Titi had to defer her term as Regional Coordinator of APWLD Secretariat in Thailand because her team in Aceh needed her help to provide relief support to the Acehnese survivors. Two members in her Aceh team died in the tsunami and many lost family members. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk and Duangkamol Sirisook of Sustainable Development Foundation, Thailand; Sunila Abeysekera of INFORM, Sumika Perera of CATAW and Sarala Emmanuel of Suriya Women's Development Centre, Sri Lanka; and Azra Talat Sayeed and the research team of Roots for Equity, Pakistan, for their hard work in conducting the Survey and special thanks to Lin Chew, an adviser of Global Fund for Women and Mamacash without whose "push" this project would not have gone ahead.

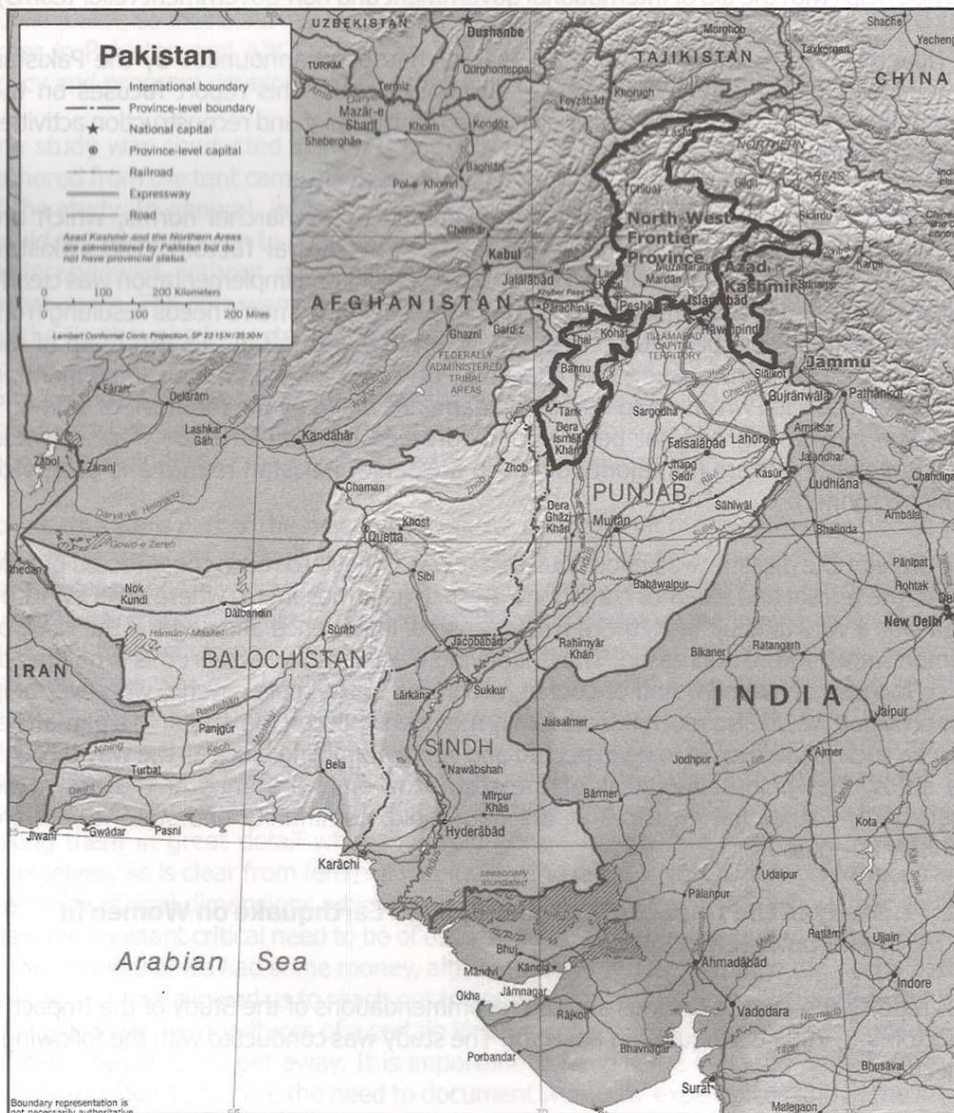
Cholpon Akmatova
Project Coordinator
APWLD



I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Effects of the Earthquake in Pakistan

The October 8, 2005 earthquake which hit various areas of the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan and a vast area in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) will remain in the memories of the people of Pakistan and AJK for ever. The earthquake of magnitude 7.6 on the Richter scale has taken thousands of lives. According to official figures, 86,000 lives were lost. 3.5 mln people were left homeless and thousands of children were orphaned as a result of the earthquake. To date, the government has no data on male/female ratio of those who died during the earthquake. There are no concrete figures for those who have suffered severe injuries and amputations.



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/pakistan_rel_2002.jpg

Immediately after the earthquake, citizens of Pakistan from every walk of life were the first to arrive with hastily put together relief goods. It needs to be mentioned that the enormity of the earthquake started to sink in only by nightfall (the catastrophe struck at 8:52 a.m.) and it was only on the second day that people realised the scale of the tragedy.

Most of the government organised relief efforts were carried out by the Pakistan Army. In the first wave of help, there was little choice, as the treacherous mountainous paths were not easily reached by the common people. The earthquake was followed by heavy rainfall for nearly 3 days making the preliminary relief work even more difficult. Many of the roads were blocked and some areas could not be reached for many days after the earthquake. In other areas, the Pakistan Army's helicopters were the only means to provide help (with the aid of international government and non-government relief teams).

By November 2005, a number of relief policies had been announced by the Pakistan government for the affected areas in Pakistan and AJK. This report focuses on the government policies developed and implemented for the relief and reconstruction activities in the aftermath of the earthquake.

In Pakistan and AJK, women's lives are controlled by patriarchal norms, which are accentuated by particular religious demands and cultural factors. The Pakistan Government's relief and rehabilitation policy development and implementation was clearly a male dominated arena. Thus, there was no surprise that women's needs resulting from the earthquake would be ignored in the mayhem that was left in the aftermath of the October 8, 2006 earthquake. The challenge of developing and then implementing progressive policies which could reflect the demands made by the forefront of women's liberation movement, has not been at all addressed by the extremely male-oriented Pakistani policy makers (a majority of which are senior Pakistan retired and in-service army personnel).

The scale of the disaster was enormous that it was difficult to reach the affected people due to the terrain and weather conditions. In such an atmosphere, where relief effort by itself was a very difficult task, there was a sense of impatience and anger if the issue of women's needs were addressed. The underlying messages were clear: this is no time to be so focused on women. And of course, according to the male psyche, whatever help was provided would also reach female family members through the males. In a patriarchal society, such an attitude is to be expected and was a stumbling block all the way through the study. The high-handedness of the state, the omni-presence of the army, the disgustingly patriarchal practices at the household, community and state level were glaringly obvious.

1.2 Study of the Impact of October 8, 2005 Earthquake on Women in Pakistan: Methodology

This report presents the findings and the recommendations of the Study of the Impact of October 8, 2005 Earthquake in Pakistan. The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- to document women's human rights violations and discrimination against women in the earthquake aftermath in Pakistan;

- to identify how state and non-state actors responded to the earthquake from the gender perspective, and what the effects are for women of the specific policies and approaches;
- to contribute to the understanding of the social impacts of the disaster, and its impact on women in particular, an increased understanding of local mechanisms taking place as a reaction to the situation and to specific forms of aid;
- to identify lessons learned from the experiences related to the earthquake and to make recommendations for gender sensitive disaster management in other natural disasters.

This study was an attempt to include women's experiences, voices and needs into the public realm; so that concrete steps are taken to help women in the earthquake affected areas in Pakistan and AJK, as well as to make recommendations for women focused policy and program development in other disaster-ridden areas around the globe.

The study was conducted in NWFP and AJK in March – April, 2006. Some data were gathered from the tent camps in Islamabad that had not been yet dismantled at the time of the study. In general, interviews were conducted with women; in cases where men would not allow women to speak, or would not leave the tents so that the women could be interviewed without male presence, men were the ones who were the main respondents. The data were collected using a questionnaire which had two components: (a) the Earthquake Impacts (EI), and the (b) Household Data form. The EI form focused on the difficulties faced by women and families as a result of the earthquake. The HD form collected data on household members of each woman included in the study; the data in the household form included age, education, work and income of the household members, including those who had died or suffered injuries in the earthquake.

For us who were part of the research team, we can say that the task that we undertook was one of the most difficult ones, both personally and professionally. It was painful to see the conditions in which the affected people, women and children in particular, had to survive after the earthquake. The research team's paramount feeling was helplessness. We knew that we did not have the means to extend the kind of help that was urgently needed; there was no Aladdin's lamp at hand which could have been used to 'fix' the situation; and our own feeling of helplessness was a source of constant internal conflict that never found resolution. As we would talk to women – respondents of the study, many remarked "you have come to put salt in our wounds". Indeed, to a great extent this was exactly right. There was little immediate help that we could provide but we were asking them in great detail what they had gone through and what they wanted for themselves. As is clear from feminist ideologies, the issue of research is contentious and has many ethical dimensions which have really not been answered adequately. In this case, the constant critical need to be of assistance never left any member of the research team. Thankfully we had some money, although very meagre to match the needs of the people, and that allowed us to reach out to some of the most vulnerable women. But the feeling that we were 'vultures of a certain kind' was ever present amongst us from which we could never really get away. It is important to have some dialogue on this issue to understand how to resolve the need to document women's' experiences and at the same time address the issue of ethics and caring code of research conduct.

The study covered 920 individuals from 125 households affected by the earthquake. Of the total of 125 household questionnaires, 55 (49%) were from NWFP, 61 (52%) from AJK and 9 (7%) from Islamabad, capital of Pakistan. A total of 21 tent camps in NWFP, AJK and Islamabad were visited by the research team. Of 125 questionnaires, 72 (58%) questionnaires were collected from tent camps in the three areas. The tent camps were classified as organised and spontaneous camps. The research team visited five organised and two spontaneous camps in NWFP; and two organised and 10 spontaneous camps in Kashmir (see Annex 1). In Kashmir, of the 60 families included in the study, 36 (60%) were from tent camps in two districts, Bagh and Muzaffarabad. In NWFP, of the 56 families included in the study, 27 (48%) were from tent camps, the remaining 9 households were from two tent camps in Islamabad.

Household Data

Demographic information was collected from a total of 125 households in Kashmir and NWFP covering a population of 920 individuals. In the 125 households, 137 (13.0%) individuals had died during the earthquake. Of the 920 individuals included in the household survey, 50% were females. Of the household population, 63% were single, 31% married. Widows comprised 5.0% and widowers only 1.0%. Nine persons in the age group of 15-17 years were married, of these eight were girls. The age range of the household members is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Age Range

Age Range	All Age Range (%)	Females Age Range (%)	Males Age Range (%)
Up to 1 year	4.3	3.5	5.2
2 - 4 years	9.7	9.3	10
5 - 7	12	11.9	11.9
8 - 9	7.6	8.9	6.3
10 - 14	12.8	13	12.6
15 - 17	8.4	7.4	9.3
18 - 21	7.7	9.1	6.3
22 - 30	13.8	13.7	13.9
31 - 40	12	11.3	12.8
41 - 50	5	5.7	4.3
51 - 60	3.6	3.7	3.5
61+	3	2.4	3.7
Total	920	460	460

Education

Majority of the respondents had low levels of education which basically means that most of them do not belong to the professional working class and hence in a more vulnerable position after the disaster. Of the 920 persons included in the survey, 791 were above 4 years of age. Of the 791, 401 (50.6%) were females and 390 (49.3%) males. Of these 791, 30% had no education (see Table 2). Another 18.5% had either only read the Quran or attended a madrissah but had no other education. Only 1% of the population had attained graduation, and only 1 person had a Master's degree. The segregated data

shows that nearly 20% women had no education as compared to 10% men. Female enrolment in the formal education system is consistently less than that of males, the difference being seen more clearly at the secondary school level.

Table 2: Educational Status

Education	%	Male	Female
No Education	30	10.5	19.8
Non-formal	0.1	0.1	0
Quran/Madrissa	18.5	5.4	9.8
Primary (Grade 5)	30	18.3	15.1
Middle (Grade 8)	9	5.7	3.4
Secondary (Grade 10)	9	7.4	1.8
Intermediate (Grade 12)	1	0.8	0.4
Graduation	1	0.9	0.5
Total	791	390	401

The post-disaster school enrolment of children in the age group 5 -17 years is presented in Table 3. A total of 376 children were under this group, of which 191 (50.8%) were girls and 185 (49.2%) boys. In the post-disaster situation, data was collected for (a) boys and girls who had been enrolled before the disaster and went back to school after the disaster, (b) those who were not able to go back to school post earthquake (c) were only enrolled after the earthquake (d) had not been attending school pre and post earthquake. The study found fewer girls (22.6%) compared to boys (26.6%) had gone back to school (Table 3). Similarly, before the earthquake a larger percentage (17.3%) of girls had not been enrolled in school compared to boys (11.4%).

Table 3: Pre and Post Disaster School Enrolment Status

Enrolment Status	All	Boys	Girls
Enrolled Pre & Past EQ	49.2	26.6	22.6
Enrolled only Pre-EQ	18.1	9.6	8.5
Enrolled only Post-EQ	2.7	1.1	1.6
Not Enrolled Pre or Post EQ	28.8	11.4	17.3
Missing	1.3	0.5	0.8
Total	376	185	191

Employment Status

Of the total 920 respondents, 493 (53.6%) were in the age group 15 years and above. The 493 respondents fell into four categories with respect to employment status. Those who had paid employment before and after the earthquake were 22%; 23% comprised those who had worked before but did not work after the earthquake. Those who did not work either before or after were 54%. Those who did not work before but were working after the earthquake comprised only 1%.

Of these 22% who had been working before and after the earthquake, only 14 (13%) were females and 94 (87%) were males. Women in this category were working as mid-wives, teachers, domestic workers, tailors and agricultural workers. There were two women teachers who had full-time jobs and were getting monthly salaries in the range of Rs 5,000-9,000. There were two women who were mid-wives earning about Rs 2,000 per month. The rest of 14 working women had incomes less than Rs 1,000 per month.

A total of 54% of the respondents had been unemployed both before and after the earthquake, of them 112 (42%) were females. A meagre 1.0% of women not employed before the earthquake were engaged in paid work after the disaster.

Of the total sample, 19.3% were in the age group of 10-14 years: 49.2% boys and 50.8% girls. With respect to both sexes, 96% were not working before or after the earthquake. Among the boys, 2% had been working before and after, with another 2% who had worked before but had no work after the earthquake. Amongst the girls in this age group, 5% worked before but not anymore.

Earthquake Fatalities

137 people died in 125 surveyed households as a result of the earthquake: 70 (51%) males and 67 (49%) females (Table 4). Nearly 37% of the deaths occurred in the age group ranging from less than a year old to 7 years. The ratio of deaths amongst males and females is nearly the same except in the age range 10 to 21 years, where a larger number of young women have died. However, the sample is very small to make any conclusive statements.

Table 4. Earthquake Fatalities

Age Range	All Age Range (%)	Females Age Range (%)	Males Age Range (%)
Up to 1 year	16.8	7.3	9.5
2 - 4 years	10.9	5.8	5.4
5 - 7	10.2	4.4	5.8
8 - 9	0.7	0.7	-
10 - 14	8.8	5.8	2.9
15 - 17	2.9	2.2	0.7
18 - 21	2.2	2.2	-
22 - 30	11.7	6.6	5.1
31 - 40	10.9	4.4	6.6
41 - 50	5.8	0.7	5.1
51 - 60	6.6	3.6	2.9
61+	12.4	5.1	7.3
Total	137	67	70

1.3 Human Rights in Pakistan

Pakistan has a poor human rights record. The country has been under various military regimes for most of its history with a martial law for most of the time. Pakistan's first constitution was passed in 1973, 26 years after the state's establishment in 1947. Since then, the constitution has been basically a tool to be played with by various ruling parties, including military regimes.

Pakistan's last census of 1998 reports a population of 130 million. At least, 65% of its population is rural and has limited access to public services, including health care, educational facilities, water pipelines and sanitation.

There is a sharp class divide in the country, with feudal elite owning vast areas of agricultural land. One of the biggest landlords of Asia comes from Pakistan, who is considered to own over 50,000 acres of land. Although no reliable statistics are available, it is considered that 90% of farmers in the country are small or landless farmers. A report as early as in the 1960s indicated concentration of wealth in the hands of 22 families resulting in misuse and abuse of power. The military regime is refusing to relinquish illegal hold over nearly 80,000 acres of land which is in actual rightful ownership of peasants who have tilled that land for many generations before 1947.

Under the present military regime that has been in power since October 12, 1999, many ordinances have been passed in favour of national and international corporations. As part of assisting the corporate sector in its profit-oriented exploitative operations, the government has recently passed a bill which will force industrial labour to work for 12 hours a day. This includes women work force.

Since 2001, Pakistan has been one of the strongest allies of the US in its "War against Terror" and has allowed extreme atrocities against its citizens, including US military operations inside Pakistani borders. At least 18 people were killed in these operations, majority of them were women and children.

Women's Human Rights in Pakistan

Women comprise only 48% of the Pakistan population. This statistics immediately portray the situation of women in Pakistan, as except for South Asia, all over the world women comprise a higher ratio than men. The male preference in a highly patriarchal society is considered the cause of this decreased ratio of females versus males. Many baby girls do not survive their first few years of life basically due to neglect, lack of care from parents to provide them with adequate nutrition and medical care. However, the norms governing women's role in the society is highly influenced by a woman's class, and women still hold a subservient role to men of the same class.

The society is geared towards creating a system where women have few rights. Cultural norms dictate that women belong inside the house, and her public appearance is viewed with disfavour. This is especially true for rural areas. Women who are employed in paid work have a lower social status than housewives who respect patriarchal norms of preserving the 'sanctity of homes'.

Right to choose a spouse is almost non-existent, with the girls brought up to be submissive to their parents' wishes in choosing a life partner for them. According to the Asian Development Bank, "about 23% of females between the age of 15 and 19 are married, compared with 5% of the male population in the same age group".¹ Divorce rates remain very low giving further testimony to the fact that the highly patriarchal society provides little space for women to seek a life outside of her husband's 'protection'. Divorced women have even lower status than single women and are generally considered to have a 'loose' character even by other women.

The Pakistani state has never spent more than 5% of its GDP on health and education together. The lack of state spending on health has horrendous implications for women. It is reported that 30,000 women die during delivery each year. The statistics are worse for rural areas than urban due to the more patriarchal culture existing in the extremely feudal society. Women's lower social status directly reflects on their ability to access health care. Women in Pakistan suffer from anaemia, a condition which further deteriorates during their child bearing age. It is worthwhile to note that Pakistan ranks 100 out of 102 countries on the Gender Development Index (GDI)². The country is facing a very high population growth almost at 3% per annum. These figures are indicative of the lack of control women exercise over their bodies and reproductive systems.

According to the 1998 census, only 32.5% of females were literate as compared to 56.5% of males. The situation is starkly worse for women in rural areas versus women in urban areas. According to Asian Development Bank³, "gender disparities in educational attainment are even greater in the rural areas. Only 3% of rural 12 year old girls continued in school, compared with 18% of boys. Less than 1% of girls remained in school in the 14 year old age group compared with 7% of boys. ... Out of the 172 professional colleges in 1996-97, only 10 exist exclusively for women."

Although by the Pakistan constitution as well as by the Islamic Shariah, women have rights of inheritance, there is clear violation of this right. This is especially so for women in the rural society. Daughters are almost never granted land entitlement deeds. When women have property entitlements, property is normally controlled by their spouses or other heirs.

A vast rural and urban population of women is economically active. This is especially true for peasant women, who play a major role in all forms of agriculture production. Peasant women are responsible for taking care of livestock and harvesting food crops, such as wheat and rice. Peasant women will even migrate from district to district in search of food crop harvesting so that they are able to store grains for their household food security. Cotton which is the highest foreign exchange earner for Pakistan is picked by women. But this vast agricultural labour force rarely has absolute control over their earnings. Especially so in the rural areas, male head of the household will collect women's earnings.

¹ Asian Development Bank. Country Briefing Paper-Women in Pakistan. Situational Analysis of Pakistan-an overview. [http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women in Pakistan/chap_01](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Pakistan/chap_01); July, 2000.

² GDI measures the same variables as the Human Development Index, except that the GDI adjusts for gender inequalities in the three aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living

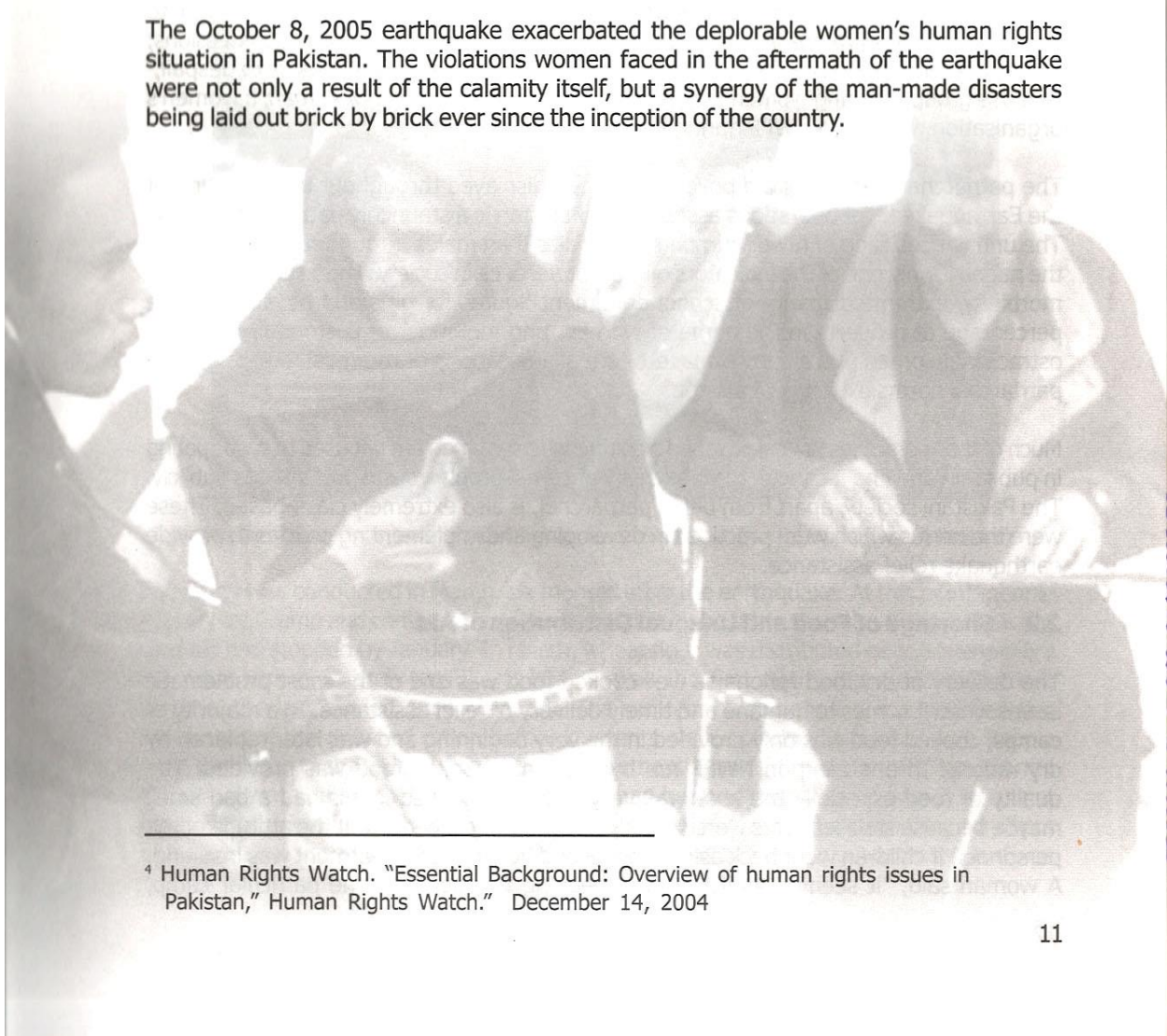
³ Ibid.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 70-90% of women face domestic violence in Pakistan. According to the Human Rights Watch:⁴

"Violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, rape, 'honour killings', acid attacks and trafficking are rampant. Survivors of violence encounter unresponsiveness and hostility at each level of the criminal justice system, from police who fails to register cases or investigate cases of gender-biased violence to judges with little training or commitment to women's equal rights."

Although rape is very rarely reported, even when it is reported there are state ordinances which then play against the women. The infamous Hudood Ordinance, passed under General Zia-ul-Haq, charges raped women of having committed adultery unless she can produce four witnesses who have seen the rape. This ordinance has been under fire since the 1980s, but the strong right-wing religious clerics have held control over all governments and no government has been able to make even very weak amendments to the ordinance, let alone it being totally revoked, a constant demand of the women human rights groups and activists.

The October 8, 2005 earthquake exacerbated the deplorable women's human rights situation in Pakistan. The violations women faced in the aftermath of the earthquake were not only a result of the calamity itself, but a synergy of the man-made disasters being laid out brick by brick ever since the inception of the country.



⁴ Human Rights Watch. "Essential Background: Overview of human rights issues in Pakistan," Human Rights Watch." December 14, 2004

II. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE EARTHQUAKE

2.1 Relief Assistance Policies based on Patriarchal Norms

In general, people would report that more women than men had died during the earthquake, as women had run back into the houses to save their children. It was also reported that more women had suffered major disabilities due to being caught in the rubble from the collapsing buildings. However, the government has not provided gender disaggregated data of deaths in the earthquake.

The earthquake has opened up many new issues with respect to human rights violations against women, as well as again highlighted the practices and norms of a feudal system, all detrimental to women's rights. In some ways, the biggest violation has been a sense in the communities that the disaster occurred due to sins of women. In many instances, the research team was told of immoral character of women in Kashmir and NWFP. Reportedly, bodies of eight naked women had been recovered. A group of women in NWFP mentioned that people blamed women, in general, for the tragedy. "If our moral practices (*amal*) had been better this would not have happened. It is terrible enough, to have survived the earthquake, to face the huge loss of family and friends, and possessions; on top of that to feel guilty for all that is being said about 'our sins' drives us to despair," said this group of young women. Similar stories were reported by *Shirkatgah*, a women's organisation working in NWFP during the disaster.

The patriarchal element of aid policies has been displayed throughout the reporting of the Earthquake relief operations assessment. Pakistan is a staunchly patriarchal society. The unbalanced ratio of fewer numbers of females than males throughout the history of the nation is only one of the indicators of male preference in society. The issue of maternal morbidity, extreme disparity of school enrolment figures for girls and boys, negligible percentage of property in the name of women, and a number of customary norms of ostracising women (*karo kari*, *wana*, etc) are all indications of the most vicious kind of patriarchal norms existing in Pakistan.

Much of these practices have developed a culture where women are not used to participating in public life and find it difficult to voice their concerns, problems and preferences publicly. The Pakistani society, apart from being patriarchal, is also extremely class-based. These were the norms which were practiced in developing and implementing policies to provide earthquake relief assistance.

2.2 Shortage of Food and Unequal Distribution of Aid

The delivery of dry food rations as well cooked food was one of the most problematic issues when it comes to humane and timely delivery of relief assistance. In a majority of camps, cooked food was only provided in the very beginning and was later replaced by dry rations. In one camp in NWFP run by the Army, cooked food was provided. The quality of food especially the *rotis* was very poor and cooked lentils had a bad smell maybe because stale leftovers were served. Women complained about the attitude of the personnel; if children went back asking for second helpings the treatment was insulting. A woman said, "it seemed as if we were begging for food." In one particular camp,

women reported that the queue for cooked food would be long, and if there was a general rush to get to the food, army personnel would push the people back, irrespective of the fact that women were also being roughly treated in the process.

The most common form of food aid had been wheat flour. This wheat had come from two major sources: US AID and the government of Turkey. Generally, women preferred the Turkish wheat, complaining that the US AID wheat, slightly red in colour, was not milled to a level of fineness that was used for cooking *rotis*, women felt that they were not able to make eatable *rotis* from it. In some camps, uncooked noodle packets had also been distributed and women having never seen them before were not sure what to do with them. In nearly all camps, women were sick of the constant supply of lentils provided as dry ration with not much variety even in the kind of lentils being provided; only one kind called *channe ki dal* was being provided cooked or uncooked. In a majority of camps milk was not provided either for children or for daily consumption of tea, a much imbibed drink of the region. Women constantly remarked on the large amount of money they were spending to get milk for the children and for tea.



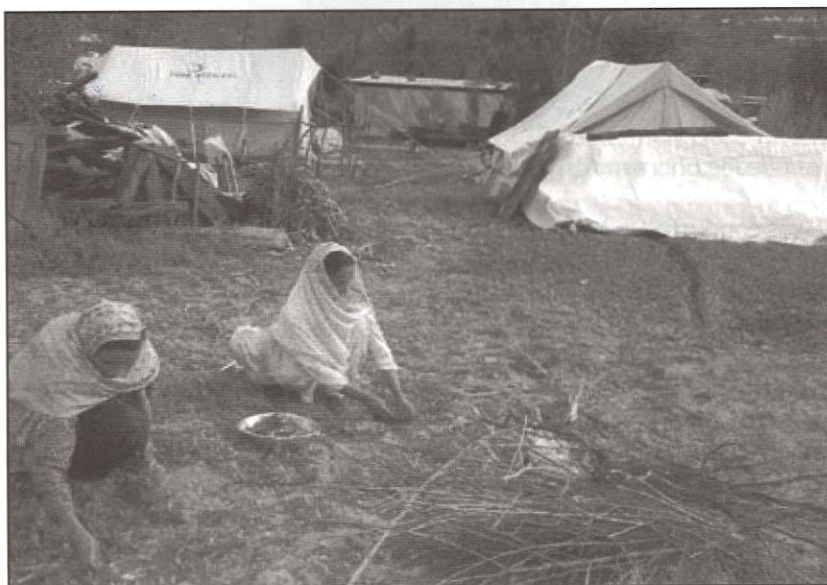
Women headed households did not access tents and food dropped by helicopters

The study was conducted in March, six months after the earthquake. At this point, people in every tent camp and communities were complaining about the shortage of food. Basically, food aid had stopped by January. In March, wheat flour was distributed nearly everywhere the team visited in both NWFP and AJK. It was the first distribution in the past two months, the last carried out in January. The survivors also believed that was the last instalment of the dry food ration before the tents were going to be dismantled. People were promised that they would go back to their homes and get food rations there. Army personnel were telling them that army troops had been notified of their new positions at the point of origin in communities and people would be given food there. The survivors were sceptical about it as no such promises had been made by the government and was really a ruse to get people evacuated with minimum of fuss.



Men and Women carrying sacks of wheat flour from aid distribution points

In the communities, especially in Kashmir, community committee members had been created for distribution of aid. In none of the areas visited did we find women included as part of these community committees. In these all-men committees class dynamics certainly played out to further weaken the weak and strengthen the powerful. In one area, a retired army personnel had a lot of sway over the committee and it was easy to see that he had received a large share of aid for himself. As part of aid, corrugated sheets were distributed per family, and he reported having received a large number of those sheets for his family. In another community visited, it was obvious that the more influential members of the community, who had more connections to aid agencies and were literate, were certainly using their sources/resources for greater benefits.



It would be unfair to say that aid did not reach the people in general. There was no known incidence where aid had not reached a community, however, it was obvious that distribution was not even; class dynamics and connections to the Armed Forces was certainly a major factor in accessing more aid. An obviously well-off woman told us with great arrogance that she had called an army officer and a tent was delivered to her home.

It was also obvious that communities who had the resources to shift their families either to Punjab or even Karachi, right after the earthquake and in the most difficult months after, had done so. Some of these families had come back by March and were busy rebuilding their homes. Those women had little idea of the relief distribution system that had taken place in the bygone months.

In areas such as Alae, one of the most devastated areas in NWFP, families reported arrival of help as late as 20 days after the earthquake. In those days families had nothing else to take shelter under except trees. Food distributed through helicopters was not accessed by women, especially widows, as they did not have men who could join the fray fighting for the dry rations being thrown in packets.

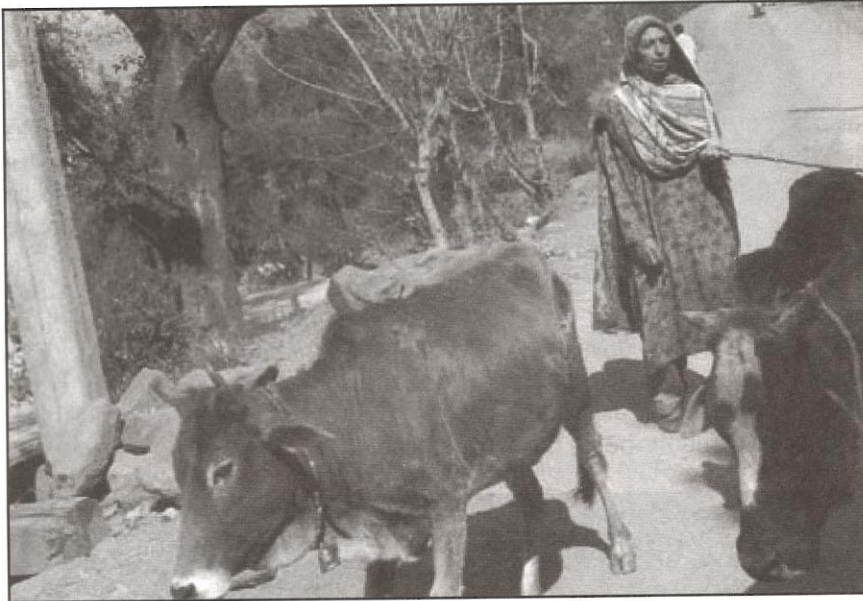


Male dominated long lines for food at aid distribution points

It was reported that people, including women, had fasted (as the earthquake hit on the third day of Ramadan) without actually having food to start the fast at sunrise (*sehri*), neither had enough food to open the fast at sunset. Families and neighbours shared whatever food that could be accessed from under collapsed homes and shops; another source was the slaughtering of animals for food.

A vast majority of interviewed women did not access aid directly. This was also verifiable by visits to the aid distribution points, which were extremely dominated by men. However, near one community, it was seen that both men and women were carrying sacks of wheat flour on their shoulders.

It was clear that women, even in the face of such trauma, were still taking care of everyday needs. These ranged from washing clothes, and collecting edible plants to cooking food and looking after their livestock.



A middle-aged woman who had been interviewed as she washed her daily load of washing shared her immense sorrow of losing two adult unmarried daughters to the earthquake. She had a small daughter, hardly 10 years old, who was helping her in her chores. The woman mentioned the immense amount of work load that had now fallen on her shoulders. According to her, the older girls had been totally responsible for running the household and she was now unable to cope with the daily chores that she had to carry out. Although she did have sons they were obviously not sharing in the daily household tasks.

2.3 Violence against Women: Abduction of Women and Girls

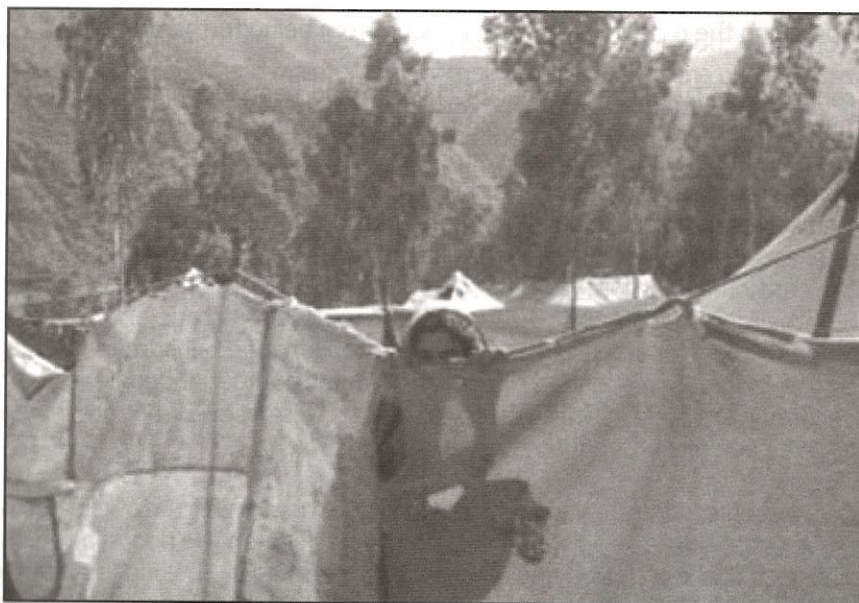
The study focused on the lives of women in the tent camps to understand the difficulties faced by women in the relief camps. The data included issues of women's access to relief supplies and other facilities, as well as the impact of the earthquake on their lives. One of the major issues that came up during the interviews was women's concern about their own and their daughters' physical safety and security. The daily issue of food and water had almost become secondary to their constant worry about immediate and long-term security. Many women remarked that the tents did not have doors and they were constantly worried that somebody could come in. Women did not use the toilets at night, as they would have to walk a distance and they were afraid.

Purdah and Safety Issues

There is no doubt that for women, life in tent camps was much harder than for men. The primary factor was the restraints on their mobility whether it was out of fear of new unknown surroundings, or religious norms of *purdah* (gender segregation and female seclusion). There was a general sense of fear, especially in tent camps visited in Islamabad,

about abduction of women and children. We were told about a woman who came to provide assistance to camp residents. She had been coming for some time and had built up some trust amongst the women. On one of such visits she took two teenage girls with her for shopping for clothes. She never came back and the girls have been missing ever since. There were rumours that the girls had been sold in Hira Mandi (a "red light" area in Lahore, Pakistan). Irrespective of the fact that this is true or not, the fact remains that the girls are missing and it is extremely doubtful that they are safe from physical and sexual abuse, wherever they are. There were many rumours about women, especially young girls who had disappeared from tent camps. Some were blamed for 'running away' while others were supposed to have been abducted.

Women would report about their men unwilling to go to work as they were concerned about leaving their wives alone in the tents. A woman at an Islamabad camp mentioned that most of the work was available in hotels in the night shift but her husband did not want to leave her alone at night. Another woman reported that she and her husband slept on either side of their daughters to keep them safe. In Islamabad, women were also afraid to send their children out of the camp area: one girl had gone to buy milk from a nearby shop and was run over by a car as she was crossing the road; the child did not survive the accident. Most of the affected people were from rural or semi-rural areas and found it difficult to cope with the city surroundings. Women would remark that they were in a strange environment and hence started being more particular about *purdah*, more so than they would have been in their own communities. The constraint was also limiting their mobility and ability to take care of themselves and their families.



There is no doubt that *purdah* is practiced with a lot more zeal in NWFP than Kashmir. In one of the biggest tent camps, Mira Tent Village, outside Bisham, Shangla District, NWFP, men had constructed washrooms inside their own tent areas by putting up sheets and women were not allowed to use the public facilities. Women complained bitterly about the restrictions they were facing as even when they went to fetch water "with one hand we balance our water containers and with the other try to keep our faces covered with

chadar (large piece of cloth worn over the shirt). A comment by a man in this camp was “*aurat ko toe azad chorna hee na-he chah hiya- agar usko azadi dee toe uska damagh kharab ho jata hae* (a woman should not be left free; if you give her freedom she loses her mind {meaning that she ‘abuses’ her freedom by indulging in practices not considered correct or chaste})).”

A large number of marriages were taking place in the tent camps. This trend had a number of reasons. First, the issue of insecurity was playing heavily on to the minds of the tent inhabitants. Our team had met a young newly married girl in one of the villages near Muzafarabad whose parents were still living in a tent camp and had pushed for her marriage to her cousin to get her out of the camp for fear of her safety.

Women were shaken facing one disaster after another. This is well portrayed by the case study of a particular community in Muzaffarabad district. The community was situated close to a site where a huge mountain had fallen sideways to block water channels to form a huge lake. In this area there was a constant fear of rising water level. Much of the cultivable land was lost to the earthquake, and more land could be submerged. Apart from all the other losses suffered by this community, the threat of another impinging disaster was playing havoc with their sense of security. A particular group of women who came from wealthy and politically influential families were asked why they were not shifting away to a safer site. According to the women, they did not feel safe anywhere else because there were a rising number of kidnappings. In this particular community, a young unmarried girl had been evacuated by helicopter to a hospital in Lahore. She had been raped by a doctor and the case was widely reported in newspapers. But the family was not pursuing the case to keep their ‘honour’ from being further bandied.

It was reported on TV that a number of children had been kidnapped from their tent camp. Two girls who escaped were able to tell their story. A group of young girls and boys were crossing a road to get to a water site. A vehicle came by and people from the vehicle sprayed some substance on the children. When they regained consciousness they found themselves in a secure building in an unknown locality among other kidnapped children. These children had been living with their aunt, as both parents had been killed during the earthquake. According to the girls, kidnapped persons were used for forceful removal of their internal organs. These sisters were able to escape and were currently living in one of the orphanages. The house where kidnapped children were kept was raided by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and a number of people were arrested but no children were present at the facility anymore. It is believed that other kidnapped children have been moved to another area.⁵

A group of women cited examples of their own area, where men from outside of Kashmir and in some cases outside Pakistan would come knocking on the doors in the daytime, pretending to sell goods (clothes and utensils) but were actually looking for young girls to kidnap. The women reported that men from their communities had organised themselves to ensure that there was always somebody in the neighbourhood on guard. This kind of an incident was experienced by Roots research team as well. It had been dusk as a number of women from the research team were walking towards their hotel in Bagh, AJK.

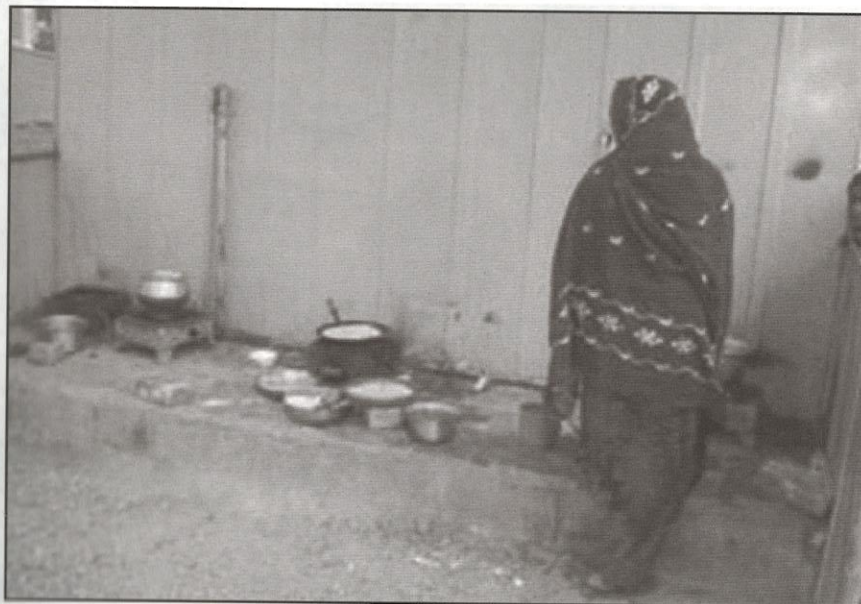
⁵ “Gang involved in quake victims’ kidnapping busted,” Daily *DAWN*, September 7, 2006

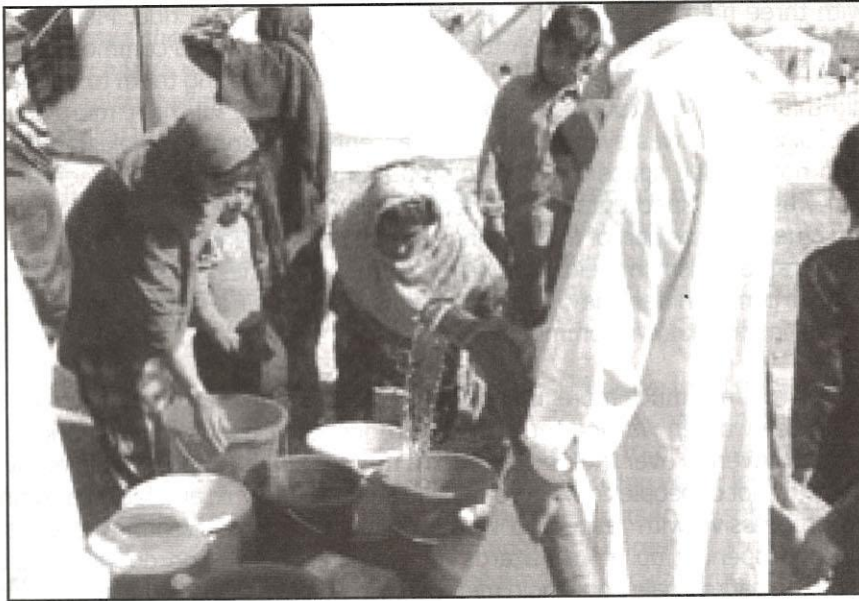
A car with three men stopped and they offered to give them a ride. Men were quite threatening in their posture, and their tone and mannerisms lacked common courtesy or respect. On being faced with a number of assertive women telling them to go their way, they said that they were running a taxi and offering a ride. All three men were from Northern Pakistan, as was evident from their accents. The norms in Pakistani/Kashmiri society do not provide space for men to stop and talk to unknown women and their behaviour was quite unacceptable. The locals reported the influx of a large number of men from other areas as part of the ongoing earthquake relief effort; their brash behaviour was creating antagonism in the community. It is true, what these men would not dare do in their own communities they had no qualms about being openly aggressive and disrespectful in an unknown community.

Women in NWFP face much more intense physical restriction than women in AJK. It was common to see women walking the streets with just their heads covered and in many cases with no covering over their faces. Such a norm is almost impossible in many areas of NWFP. With a lot of people coming from these areas to Kashmir, and facing a community far more progressive with respect to women's liberation, was creating tensions of its own kind and opening up more hazards for women. There is no doubt the ultimate decision on the part of male household members would be to restrict the mobility of women, or for women themselves would decide to restrict their mobility in face of the various threats prevalent in the street in the post-disaster situation.

2.4 Camp facilities

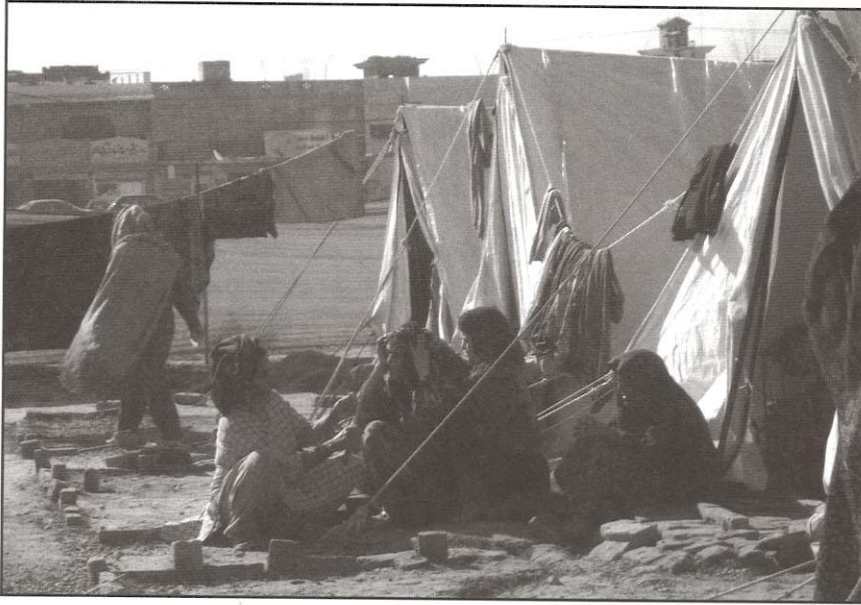
Women and girl children were totally responsible for cooking food, washing clothes, fetching water, cleanliness and maintenance of their tents as well as the outside surrounding area. Cooking space was maintained inside the tent camps. In one camp site, separate kitchens had been created for families to cook food there. There were only 20 stoves made available, of which some had been put outside the kitchens. Although the facility was useful, it was not catering to the huge tent city.





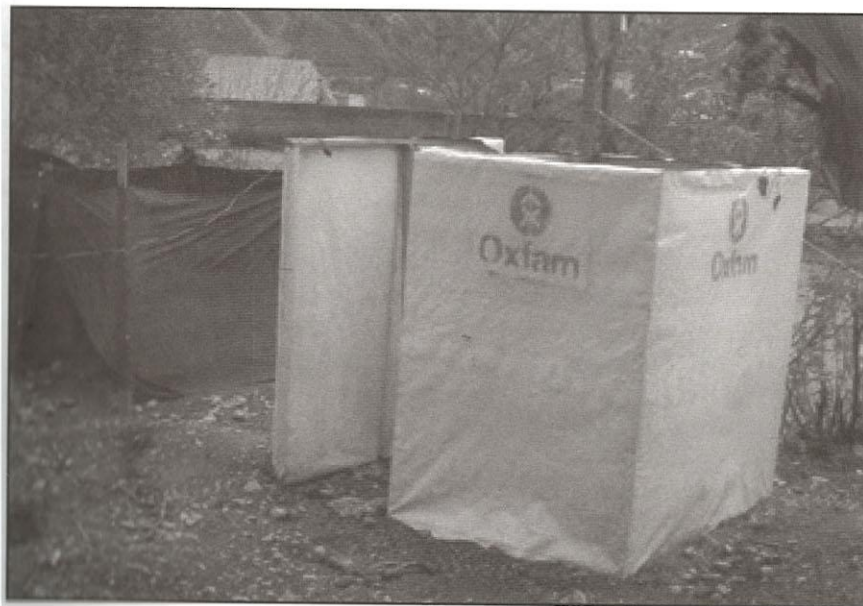
There were also criticisms from women that many of the facilities had been set up as late as February and the tent camps were scheduled to be dismantled by March 31st. So no real time management had been in practice while planning services. It is a wonder how these women coped with the harsh living conditions of these tent camps all through the cold months, including snowfall and later heavy rainfall. In one of the women's shelter, a woman had tied her son to the bed because she did not want him to go out and play in the mud. She was worried about washing him in the freezing cold as well washing and drying his clothes. So however harsh her measures may seem, she was protecting her child to the best of her ability.

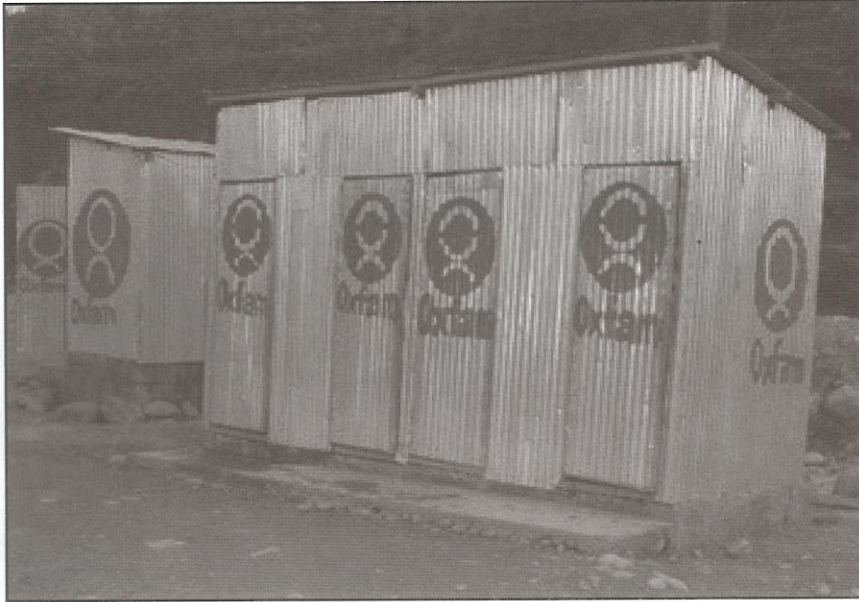




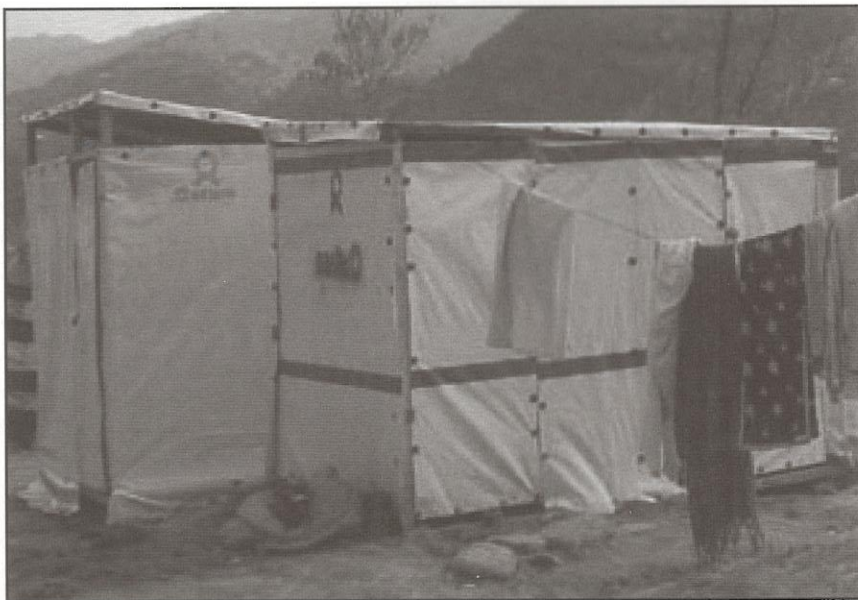
Washroom Facilities

Of the 72 interviewed households living in tent camps, 54% reported there were separate washroom facilities for women, 36% had washrooms used both by men and women. This indeed is an immense shortfall in services as women risk harassment as well as generally more unhygienic conditions when men use the same facilities. Women in a tent camp mentioned that men had burnt cigarette holes in washroom tents (generally made out of thick vinyl material). This caused general distrust amongst women in using these facilities. Mothers often reported escorting their daughters to washrooms and guarding outside.





Women are normally hesitant about going to washrooms if men, especially strange men, are in the vicinity. Women in the tent camps did not feel comfortable using the washrooms since many men would be present in the vicinity. In camps with no separate toilets for men and women and up to ten families sharing one toilet, women did not feel safe using toilets. Women were responsible for cleaning the washrooms themselves. At one particular camp run by the Army in Balakot, NWFP, there were cleaners available and later the army personnel would order women to clean the washrooms themselves. According to the women, they would use harsh language to force them to clean the facilities; the army personnel would even go to the extent of holding sticks in their hands.



In three (10%) tent camps both separate as well as combined washrooms were reported. For at least one of the tent camps, the case was that washroom facilities had been made inside the living quarters itself, and hence women were not leaving their cordoned off area as they were not allowed to go to the public washrooms.

Playgrounds

Only in one tent camp in Islamabad, a well-organised playground had been created for children. There were no such playgrounds for children at other tent camps, except another organised tent camp had a big tent available for children. Some tent camps had also provided games to children such as bats and balls. In the tent camps in Islamabad, however, although well-equipped, the playground was not well-lit in the evening. For children, in general, and girls in particular playgrounds must be well-lit and be under the supervision of mothers' groups.

Closure of Tent Camps

One of the most outrageous post-disaster government policies was arbitrary closing of tent camps by March 31, 2006. Policy makers' rationale was that tent camps encouraged a culture of dependency and 'addiction to free handouts.' There was no doubt that tent camps should not be allowed to continue indefinitely as, indeed, there were a number of issues related to them. One of the critical issues was a large group of people living together in close proximity in inadequate sanitation and hygiene conditions could result in proliferation of disease. The quality of life in tent camps was very poor: living quarters were cramped with no privacy available to families, especially women. Hence, it is not the closure of tent camps which is being contested but the time chosen and the arbitrary methods employed for evacuation of the camp residents.

Women were complaining bitterly of the harsh treatment by the Army *jawans*. The Army's behaviour can be judged by an incident related by a NGO worker. According to her, Mira Camp in Bisham was the biggest Army managed camp. A female Canadian relief worker was talking to the Army personnel there and asked about how the camp was managed. The Army officer told her to watch, and announced on a mike "Attention, Attention." Male camp residents came to a ground and organised themselves in lines waiting for further communication. The highhandedness and arrogance of the Army has been recounted in many ways and consistently across the length and breadth of the earthquake affected areas.

Nearly all of March it had been raining, which meant that it was very cold both in Kashmir and NWFP; the rain had made the tent camps a quagmire of mud, a real nightmare for mothers with young children. It was in these conditions that camp residents were asked to evacuate *pronto*. In some camps, there were orders that no trace of camps should be found by March 31st.

The rain had caused horrendous landslides and many of the roads were blocked, or would get blocked momentarily. Transporters taking the families back to their home towns were charging an arm and a leg. The army was ordering truck drivers to take people from camps to their points of destination. The truck drivers, being in no position to defy them directly, were obliging enough on the surface but were dumping people in the middle of the way, telling them the pay was not enough to get them to the points of

destination. So they would either charge additional fare or leave people high and dry on the roadside. In addition, in many cases, there were no roads right up to the villages and people had to trek through treacherous mountainous paths, in freezing rain, carrying not only their tents and other meagre belongings but also the weak and frail members of their family.

The UN classified pregnant women, women with very young infants, and widows, as well as the landless as a special category of vulnerable groups. These groups were not to be evacuated according to the deadline. However, we found that many of them had been given their marching orders. Everybody had to evacuate by last week of March. People who could be termed as vulnerable, especially widows, pregnant women and women with very young infants (in some cases less than 3 months old) had no idea that they were indeed 'vulnerable' and could actually stay on. All interviewed women heard about the deadline for dismantling of the tent camps, but not a single woman heard that the government was supposed to provide special facilities for pregnant women, women with young infants and widows.

When concerned NGOs had even fought for the right of such groups to stay on, the Army closed down the camps on March 31, and then classified the cluster of such tents to be 'spontaneous'. This was a classification used by the government: organised tent villages and spontaneous tent villages. The former were run by the government (rather the Pakistan Army) and the latter were set up by mainly the national and international non-government organisations, including the Pakistani political parties, business community as well as Islamic relief agencies.

According to a relief worker from one of the biggest national NGOs, in the organised tent camps the army would evacuate a set number of tents in the evenings. There would be no prior information to the families and they would be escorted back to their home towns. It needs to be pointed out, that after the October earthquake, at the onset of winter, majority of the affected people did not really want to come to tent camps. They had been cajoled or ordered to come down from the higher regions to tent camps in the valleys. Now that they *had* come down, the same tactics were being used to force them to go back.

Shelters for Women

The government in the aftermath of the earthquake focused on setting up shelters for women, although in partnership with other organisations. The research team visited two of such shelters, one in Mansehra, NWFP, and the other in Bagh, AJK. At the time of the visit, AJK shelter was quite well established whereas the one in Mansehra had just been started in the past week and hence was in preliminary stages.

The team members also tried to visit another women's shelter near Attock, Punjab, run by Al-Khubab but were not allowed entry. A retired army officer was in charge of the shelter and, according to him all visitors have to get permission from the Khubaib administration in Islamabad. What was remarkable about these shelters was the presence of male retired army personnel. By and large they were pleasant, urbane group who while remaining very polite would not provide access to the women in the shelter. The officer asked us about reasons for visiting. When we said that we would like to know how the affected women were doing, and to let the women know that there were others out

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who shared their grief, his response was that it was very unhealthy for these women to be reminded over and over again about their loss. Firstly, his reasoning in itself was not very sound, as many trauma patients need support. Second, his response showed his and the institution's paternalistic attitude towards women that "they know best". The question is whether women in the shelters were given any choice to socialize with other women and women's groups. It is nearly a two hour drive from Islamabad to Attock, and visitors would not know that they have to get permission from Islamabad. And what is the point of camp administration if camp visitors have to get clearance from Islamabad. And why a retired army officer and why males have to be in control over a women's shelter? Why was there such an acute lack of civilians in a large majority of women shelters?

This issue is especially important for AJK. There is widespread antagonism between Kashmiris and army personnel as a result of ongoing army control in the area due to the disputed nature of AJK itself. There is no doubt that this antagonism was reflected in how the army's relief operations were viewed but that in itself provides food for thought on Pakistan Army's practices toward civilians.

The behaviour of army officers with respect to their sexual conduct is notorious worldwide. The Pakistan Army's conduct toward women of Bangladesh at the time of their struggle for independence in 1971 is well documented when many women had been raped by Pakistan Army soldiers. Although, no such cases have come to light in the earthquake region, other serious 'allegations' are commonly talked about.

A fairly senior woman in the Kashmir Ministry remarked during a conversation that Kashmiri women were "supplied" for Army officers. According to her "these women should be sent to Pakistan as they would only further soil the environment here." This is no doubt a very harsh statement which further victimizes the victims, but also reflects the abuse of women in the current environment as well. During our study, although no sexual misconduct of army personnel was reported, there were a number of other issues which came to light. These have been described in detail for the two women shelters visited.

Al-Khubab Shelter for Women

A shelter for widowed women had been set up in Mansehra, NWFP. At the time of the study visit, only 11 widows had been provided with shelters. An orphanage was also to be developed adjacent to the women's shelter to provide a school for the orphanage children as well as the children of the widows. A highly patriarchal norm in Islam is that children without fathers are considered orphans even if their mothers are alive. The concept is that mothers cannot look after their children, and society has to pitch in and create workable systems for the sustenance of widows and orphans. At the moment the school was not functioning but the organisers stated they would be starting the school shortly.

The women were, in general, not satisfied with the tent camp although the level of comfort there was much higher than in the other tent camps. There was one washroom for five families. It had been raining heavily, and it was very difficult to walk in the shelter grounds but gravel had been laid out in some parts of the shelter, although the area in front of the tents was very muddy and not safe. The tents had been donated by a Turkish organisation. Each tent had been provided with four beds, three warm blankets, one cooler, one pail, some utensils, and plastic sheets to spread on the ground.

Cooked food was provided to the families: mostly lentils (*dal*) and two *rotis* per person. Tea was given only in the morning. However, at the time of the visit (about 4:00 pm) tea was being distributed and according to the women this was in consideration of the cold weather that had set in wake of the incessant rain. It was noticed that all the women were in the middle-age range, which in itself is open to various questions in terms of whether it was easier to provide help to women who were better able to cope physically with their condition. Older women, of course, have more issues in terms of dependency. However, it can also be debated that it is only the younger group of women who would have children and hence need more support with respect to schooling of their children.

It was felt, that the women in this particular shelter were not destitute. They had some family support, and had been hand picked by army personnel to come to the shelters. One woman with a six year old son reported that she had very little knowledge of the relief operations as she had been living with her mother since the earthquake (whose home had suffered minor damage) and had been brought to the shelter by army personnel. It was clear that she wanted to go back to her parents' home.

Another woman remarked that she was sending all clothes (her own and of her four sons) to her brother's house to be washed. She had been previously living in a tent close to her brother's house. The woman's husband had been a mechanic and owned his own business, although the shop had been rented. He had been earning approximately Rs 8,000 per month and the family had been economically comfortable. Currently, the area of the shop was under rubble, and her husband's body had not been recovered. The family had sold off their cow and two goats to come to this shelter. The woman remarked that they came to seek a better future for her sons. She was scared at night; her children would go to sleep and she would remain awake wondering who may walk in. There was a guard at the gate of the shelter but understandably was not enough to make women feel safe given their current circumstances. The woman remarked that "I had never gone out on my own before this," a remark often repeated by women in the course of this research.

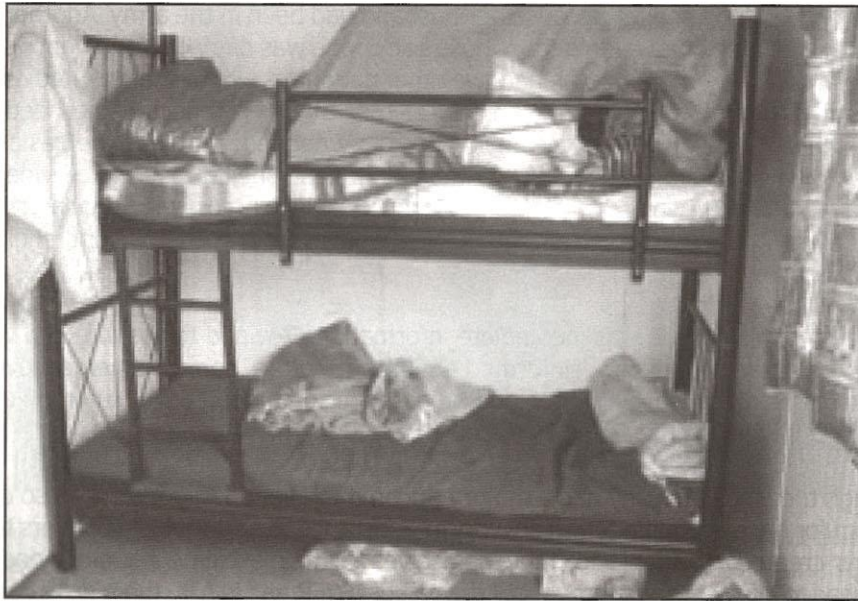
No clear information had been given to the women about their status in the shelter; they had been promised that they would be given permanent shelter, as well as schooling was to be provided for their children. According to one woman, the shelter was to function for three years. They remarked that if the promises would not come true shortly, they may just go back to their hometowns, mostly to their parents or other extended family members such as their siblings.

The patriarchal paternalistic pattern of running the camp was evident, as was of all other camps visited. The camp management was not harsh, but seemed to have this particular mindset that 'we know best'. In addition, the visit raised questions whether efforts were made to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised women.

Sarbuland Village

A total of 95 bunker homes generally referred to as containers had been provided by the government of Turkey. The containers were equipped with four bunker beds, the inside environment pleasant and easy to use and maintain. Each container also had an additional room which was used as a kitchen cum living space. The containers and the surrounding

area were well managed with gravel laid out neatly for easy walking. However, the land used for these shelters was very close to the river bed, and the research team walked over fairly large stones and boulders which were in our path. The safety of the place when monsoon comes is questionable. The area also had a history of flooding under heavy rains.



A meeting was conducted with the retired army personnel in charge of the daily running of the shelter. According to him, the senior management of Sarbuland was in the hands of retired army personnel. He was occupying one container himself, and had at least one teenage son staying on the premise. During the interview a case of a single man occupying a container was brought to his attention. The person did not have a right to the container, as obviously the shelter had been set up for widows. The supervisor shared with us how the previous manager, also from the army, had given unfair allocations and they were now creating problems. It was unacceptable that a single man was allowed to stay in the women's shelter which was meant to be a sanctuary for many vulnerable women, including young girls.

In Sarbuland we met a 60-year old widow (not as a result of the earthquake), from a fairly well off middle class family. She was sharing her bunker with her niece who had four small children. The young woman had an M.A and a permanent government job as a teacher earning, according to her, Rs 7,000 per month. She informed us that the government had paid her monthly salaries all through the period after the earthquake, so she had an assured income unlike a majority of those who had suffered through the earthquake. The clothes and gold jewellery on both women did not imply even a mildly destitute situation. The teacher's children were going to some of the most expensive schools in Bagh and her husband was a businessman currently living in Quetta, and was to join her shortly at the shelter. She had also been in Quetta staying with her mother after the earthquake and had come to the shelter after her aunt had been provided space there.

Another interviewed woman was the widow of a retired Pakistani army officer, who had died in the earthquake along with his mother. She had received Rs.100,000 + Rs 25,000 for her destroyed home. She had four sons and three daughters. She had been at another camp also run by the army. She did not know what was going to happen to her. She heard a rumour that those who had received Rs 25,000 as first instalment for destroyed homes, would be asked to leave the Sarbuland shelter. She had been able to access a bunker house at the shelter because her husband had been in the army. Another widow had lost her son and had a daughter whose back bone was damaged and hence she had no mobility anymore. The woman had two other daughters whom she reported escorting back and forth to the washroom. Anxiety of these women reflected the need for an environment where increased security was acutely needed; that was the basic reason for need of shelters for widowed women, and Sarbuland shelter failed to provide secure environment. Clearly, women with connections were able to access the Sarbuland shelter's relatively comfortable homes. All interviewed women from the Sarbuland shelter had connections to the army.

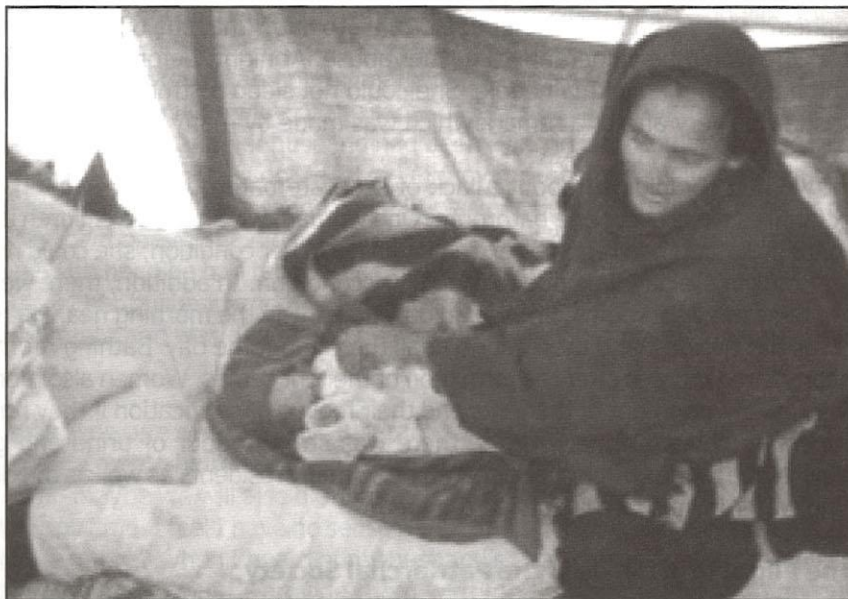
Another important issue was incomplete information provided to the affected women. They were not informed or misinformed about their future, some women believed that they would be given lease on their land (in essence containers) for a period of 10 years while others believed it was for 99 years.

Although the Pakistan Army had a major hand in the relief operations they also deserve criticism for once again hindering delivery of assistance to earthquake survivors through systems created by people to help themselves in their extreme hour of need. From Islamabad to Mansehra and throughout the rest of NWFP, and in AJK, there were consistent reports of the best of relief supplies never reaching the needy people but invariably ending up in the homes of the elite with connections to the Army. The Pakistan Army has been maintaining control over all aspects of political and economic life in Pakistan for many years. Next year in 2007, Pakistan will be celebrating its 60 years of independence. Of these years it has spent 31 years under the Army rule. The corporate arm of the army has been widening to include military farms, banks, schools, real estate, and water among others. So it is no real surprise or shock that the Army would be able to profit from the earthquake. It is just the normal order in Pakistan.

2.5 Pregnant Women

The UN reported there were approximately 40,000 pregnant women in the earthquake affected region. According to the interviews conducted and reported cases through the quantitative study, a majority of expectant mothers in the tent camps delivered their babies in the tents. The norms followed by society under normal circumstances were very much part of practices in providing care to these women in the tent villages. Even if medical aid was available in the camps, the medical doctors present were mostly men. Women and families were very hesitant to bring the doctors either to the tents or to take women to the medical units. In nearly all cases identified, deliveries had been carried out by mid-wives, commonly known as *dais* in Pakistan. These women were charging Rs 1,000 to 2,000 per case. Another woman in Bagh, AJK, reported that she had to travel to Rawalpindi (about five hour's journey across mountainous terrain) as her delivery had to be through C-section surgery. The cost of the operation came to Rs 15,000 which she took as a loan and had not been able to repay at the time the research team interviewed

her. A third woman reported walking in rain to get to the camp, and had her delivery at the camp at night with no medical assistance.



Women, in the period during their pregnancies and after delivery, had little help in the tents, and were basically looking after themselves, to the extent that some reported fetching water, washing clothes and cooking food themselves. At the Mira Camp, Bisham, NWFP, according to a Cuban doctor, women were only brought to them when their condition had deteriorated and become serious, otherwise their husbands or other male household members were not allowing them to seek medical aid. In many of the spontaneous camps there were no female doctors on call.

In one case in Bagh, a woman had given birth to a child with crooked lower legs who needed special exercises. In addition, the infant had a broken arm. The father had taken the infant girl to a camp hospital (run by an international agency) in the area, and had been told that the arm would heal by itself in time. He or his wife had no explicit instructions on exercising the infant's feet, which according to a trained health worker who was part of the research team, was necessary for the child. The research team talked to the medical doctor officially responsible for the health needs of this camp community of approximately 50 tents, but apart from the fact that he had known that a birth had taken place, he had no information regarding the infant's various medical problems. The medical doctor was very uncomfortable discussing health needs of women, particularly gynaecological issues, stressing on the cultural norms of the people and their wishes of not wanting male doctors to look after their female folk.

An extreme situation was reported by a woman who had delivered her baby whilst walking with her parents to reach a tent camp and the umbilical cord had to be cut using a stone. The woman was living alone in a tent camp with her four children. Her husband, after beating her up, had walked out on her before the earthquake; her brother-in-law accused her of immoral conduct after she had rejected his sexual advances. However, at the start of the interview she said she was living in a tent with her brother. It was only on the

prodding of other women present at the time, that she came out with her tragic story. She remarked that "people say that this disaster occurred because of women's sins, including not observing *purdah*; has God created us, women, just to bear these catastrophes?" She was afraid that if people came to know that she did not have a male 'protector' she would be vulnerable to further abuse. At night, before going to bed she would stitch the tent flap with a needle. She could not sleep restfully through the night because she was very afraid, a remark which was made by many women.

Pregnant women complained about a lack of separate bathrooms for women. In one case, six families were using one bathroom. One woman, who had five children and was eight month pregnant, had reported extreme nausea in her condition; she could not go to the washrooms in the day time due to their filthy condition. In addition, there were long queues outside the washrooms. She would only go early in the morning nearly at sunrise when it was the cleanest and then not go at all throughout the day. Bathing rooms were set up nearly three months after the formation of the tent camps. Women also mentioned the dark stuffy environment of the tents and their feeling of suffocation if they remained inside for many hours. In many tents, there was strong odour of urine and general uncleanness due to the cramped space shared by so many residents as well as the difficulty in fetching water from sources outside the area.

2.6 The Plight of Widows in the Patriarchal Society

The study made particular effort to include widowed women in the survey as it was felt that this particular category of women are marginalised and face greater hardships than others. Following are the findings of the various interviews as well as the quantitative survey with respect to widows.

In Pakistan and Kashmir, where the feudal system is still highly entrenched, widows face many atrocities including silent neglect; verbal and physical abuse, and are vulnerable to sexual harassment. Their case is worse if they do not have children and have not crossed a certain age range, i.e. below 35-40 years of age. It raises many questions about the future of these widows, as many are in their twenties with a couple of children. A society which does not accept a second marriage for women, especially if she has children from a previous husband, it is unclear whether the government is planning to facilitate safe and productive life for these women. It was often repeated that women should be adjusted within their communities, as they are feel safer and most comfortable in their own communities. If asked, a large majority of women would agree. However, the internal power and patriarchal relations remain dominant in communities; in the long run these women may be protected from external environment by an internal code of communities, but will they be protected by the community members themselves with respect to sharing of resources, economic independence, and even physical and sexual abuse. What about the right to self-determination? Our communities give very little space for self-expression in normal circumstances, let alone under such a dire crisis.

Elderly women who became widows were not necessarily in the same vulnerable situation, especially if they had sons who were willing to take care of their mothers (a norm in an Islamic society). If there were two deaths in a family (for instance a husband and a daughter-in-law) the family was recovering faster as the money came directly into control of the sons. These families were planning on building their home again with the substantial amount of money they had received (Rs 200,000 + Rs 25,000 at least for the destroyed

homes). There were many organisations as well as the army distributing corrugated sheets for reconstruction of houses. It appears the male dominance in society works to stabilise those who are strongly represented by able-bodied men. Women without such a family profile were consistently found to be vulnerable, constantly struggling for survival.

A case study was taken of an approximately 35 year old widow, living in a community where most of the families were of the same caste as hers and were her kin. At the time of the earthquake she and her husband had been living in her brother's house, and as far as she knew her brother had not received money for the house as yet, although he had applied for the house compensation twice. It was not clear whether the brother really did not receive the money or he did not want to tell her as he may have felt obliged to share the money with her. She had received Rs 100,000 from the government as compensation for the loss of her husband and had deposited the money in her brother's bank account. She was illiterate and was depending on the good will of her brother to keep her money safe.

The woman was one of the most vulnerable and bereft that the research team came across. At one point she remarked "...but I am not scared of earthquake anymore; if it comes again maybe we will also die. I am scared of people. I don't know who may enter my tent at any time. I feel I have no senses left, I keep thinking about what to do. How will I cope in the future? When I heard of my husband's death I was hoping that my sons had died at school: how would I provide them with food? I feel ashamed to go out in the village and stand in line to access aid distributed there." She stated that in the very first days of the earthquake she had not been emotionally in a position to worry about receiving aid or not. However, a survey of the other households in the neighbourhood showed that they had received far more help in terms of tents, food, and warm blankets. She had the smallest tent, and had received only 50 kilograms of wheat whereas others had received as much as 125 kilograms of wheat. She stated that in most cases she would find out later that other people had received different kind of aid. It was obvious that well-to-do families in the community had connections to the numerous aid agencies and were able to access most of the aid. The committees formed from each neighbourhood also had male members from this household. According to her, a Pakistani Army major had visited her and he stated that as a widow she should have, at least, received 18 warm blankets, but she only received four of them. The Major did not come back after that one visit.

Widows often reported that they would not go to collect rations themselves: their brothers-in-law would go for them, even if the ration card was in their name. In cases when widows had returned to their parents' home or were in the same community, their male family members were getting their rations for them.

The situation of widows varied from one place to another. In Muzaffarabad district, the research team met two widows at an aid distribution point. One was nearly fainting from the heat and the long hours she had been queuing. She also had a fever. According to these women, the staff at this particular distribution point would not allow family members to access goods on behalf of the women. No doubt, this effort was a response to ensure that aid reached the intended beneficiaries. But although steps had been taken to remedy one wrong, other problems were not addressed. For instance, the distribution point had no drinking water available or washroom facilities. Nor was there any shade or arrangements for women to take some shelter from the heat. In the end our research team members had to persuade the Army personnel at the distribution point to share

some of their water with the women. The woman and others at the distribution point reported that they had to hire a vehicle for Rs 500 to come to the distribution point and take back the dry food supplies.

Most women remarked that in the first three days, they were emotionally not in a condition to really understand what had happened. One widow mentioned that she had craved for *charas* (an addictive substance extracted from a plant and rolled into cigarettes or *biri*) but due to her newly widowed condition was too ashamed to ask for it. Another woman mentioned overwhelming hunger but there was no food available.

Many widowed women whose homes had collapsed faced total loss of household goods. For many of these women, there was nobody to help them dig out the remains from the debris. This issue was also a theme which was recurrent among widowed women or women who had men with medical problems or elderly males at home.

A huge number of livestock was also lost. This has resulted in more hardship for women, as they relied on the livestock to provide them with household needs for milk. A particular woman had lost two goats she had and had difficulty in accessing milk for her sons; the three boys were 5, 6 and 7 years old. Similarly, another woman who had four children (two boys and two girls, all under the age of seven) had lost a cow and a buffalo. All of them cited their need to give their children milk but had none available.

This report focuses on women who became widows as a result of the earthquake. However, it needs to be pointed out that at least some of these women were able to get compensation money for the loss of their husbands. But women who had been widows from before the earthquake did not even have this monetary assistance but were in no ways less vulnerable than the former group. A truly tragic story is of a woman who had been a widow for 17 years. She raised three girls (of whom the eldest had been 12 years old at the time she became a widow) and had recently married two of them to her deceased husband's nephews. Both of the young women died in the earthquake, one with her infant son, and the other leaving a six-month old baby-girl. The grandmother is now looking after the child. Although both husbands received the Rs. 100,000 compensation for the death of her daughters there was nothing for the mother, except endless tears. According to her, one of her former sons-in-law and his family were making plans for his marriage. She sent her third daughter to a *madrissa* in Islamabad, where the girl along with free religious education also gets free meals.

Widows in Tent Camps

In the 125 surveyed households, 46 women were widows, of them 15 were widowed as a result of the earthquake. One of them lost four men in her household: her husband and three sons of whom one was married also, her sons were in the age range of 25-35 years. Her married son left behind a 30 year old widow with three children, the youngest only eight months old. These women kept the compensation money they received with 'trusted' relatives. This widow stated she had received Rs 400,000. However, most probably she received Rs 200,000 as her son's family would be considered separate from her own: Rs 100,000 for her husband and another Rs 100,000 for her son. Since the government policy was to grant only Rs 100,000 per family it is difficult to believe that she had received Rs 200,000 extra. A number of families had reported receiving Rs 100,000

per person lost in the family. This particular family had not received the money in hand as they were not issued a cheque.

The various discrepancies reported in compensation money received raise a number of issues. First, did women really know how much money they received? Second, if these anomalies are actually correct, then it means that there has been discrepancy in the distribution itself. Lastly, the issue of patriarchal customs comes into play: she stated that she received Rs 100,000 as compensation for her son's death. In fact, it should have been given to her daughter-in-law. Conflicting issues related to compensations would come up many times during the study. In some cases, young widows had taken the money and gone back to parent's home with their children leaving behind their mothers-in-law who may also not have any other means of survival as they had lost their breadwinners. In other cases, there were young widows living with their in-laws and the money was controlled by the father-in-law. It is almost certain that these young widows will face a long hard life, being at the beck and call of their in-laws and made to work as unpaid servants. Many of them may face physical and even sexual abuse. If these young widows do not have a secure well-off maternal family, they will not take the risk of separating from their in-laws as they would make themselves vulnerable to sexual harassment and social stigmatisation and being termed as 'loose character'.

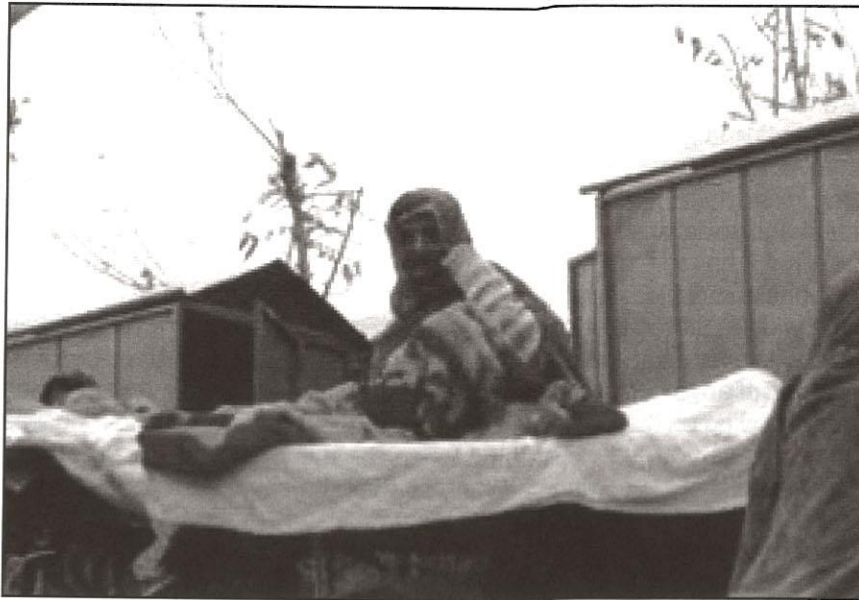
Grief and hopelessness was apparent in many of the statements made by these women. One of the widows stated that she was not scared of anything: "My husband and sons have gone, what else do I have to be afraid of now?" Another said, "After the earthquake, I am not afraid of anything." She was a 23 year old widow left with a three year old child. They were surviving on the Rs 100,000 compensation for the death of her husband, and the woman was very afraid of the time when the money would run out. She had no education, and wanted a sewing machine so that she could earn for living by sewing peoples' clothes. Another woman had seen her husband die slowly: he had been buried under rubble and there was nobody to pull him out. She had not been able to get a tent of her own and had been living with her parents.

A 25 year old widow lost her husband and two sons (3 and 6 years old); an infant daughter survived who had been only 18 days old at the time of the earthquake. The next door building had fallen into their home. Apart from her immediate family, six of her in-laws had died. She was living with her brother and sometimes with her married sister. In her community, tents had been dropped by helicopters but she had not received a tent. According to her, everybody was busy looking after their own, and there was nobody to take care of her needs. Such statements were common when it came to widowed women. She felt ashamed about standing in a receiving line to access aid; in addition she had a very young infant to look after. Somebody else went to get her food ration distributed at the camps. In general it was found that women rarely stood in lines and depended on others to get their relief supplies.

2.7 Women with Disabilities

Other major problems faced by widows were their dependence on others to look after them if they were the ones who had sustained long term injuries. It was also difficult if their dependents (such as their children or grandchildren) had health issues, especially physical injuries and the women had to provide care for them.

One of the interviewed women, who had lost her husband, four daughters, two sons and two grandchildren, had severe injuries to her legs and was unable to walk. She was moved from the hospital to the tent camp carried on a bed (*charpai*). It had been raining in the past few days, and the tent camp had been a quagmire of mud and slippery, sliding pathways, an absolute death trap even for the able-bodied. It was clearly a gross violation of the woman's right to health care and safety. However, her transportation to such a highly dangerous site at that particular point in time was just one of the many abuses she had suffered since the earthquake. For the past six months she had been shifted from one hospital to another. In between, she had been staying with her brother in one of the camps. It needs to be pointed out that using squat toilets in the camp must have been a torture for a woman with a leg injury.



It was clear that this woman's family was helping her to access medical aid, and no government assistance was available for her. Right after the earthquake, she had been carried by her brother who was on foot himself. After reaching a more populated area, an army officer had given them Rs 300 to get a taxi to the hospital. Later she received Rs 25,000 as government compensation for her injuries. Apart from this monetary assistance, there was no help to provide her with a more comfortable place to stay in keeping with her medical needs, nor was transportation assistance provided to visit various hospitals. Given the extent of her personal loss and most certainly very visible physical injuries she should have been offered special assistance.

At the time the research team interviewed her, tent camps were being dismantled. No provisions were made for her to either stay at the camp, nor was she given any assurance that she would be taken care of by the government. Her nagging worry was what would she do if she could not walk again? This woman's case points to gross failure of the government to first, formulate a clear policy for vulnerable groups, and second, to inform the vulnerable groups of their special status and type of support they are eligible for, and then actual implementation of the policy declarations. It needs to be stressed that such cases were not few and isolated. A lot of women had lost their husbands but also children, literally in the plural, and suffered physical injuries, not to mention tremendous loss of

assets (houses, household goods, clothing, livestock, etc) and livelihood. Hence, the level of grief and suffering (apart from immediate physical suffering) of these women cannot be understood by the human mind. Societies, on an everyday level, have no experience of such multitude and scale of sufferings from physical to emotional and all at the same time. However, judgemental attitudes, overburden of work through such a huge crisis, arrogance and inefficiency were evident in much of the relief work delivered by the government.

Interviews with a number of NGO personnel, who had been helping at the various tent camps, reiterate this tale of criminal neglect and hard heartedness. A young man working for Oxfam in NWFP had seen women being discharged from hospitals right after the earthquake. These women had been brought to hospitals in the chaos in the aftermath of the devastation; however, once they had been treated they were asked to leave. Many of these women had no relatives accompanying them, as they had been evacuated by helicopters. The hospital personnel in many cases did not know where their patients had come from. The women themselves would sometimes not be able to clearly identify their villages, or in some cases had only phone numbers through which they could contact their families. The phone lines were not working or there was no response from the numbers. Even when women had no one to look after them, they were asked to leave the hospital premises.

Interviews conducted with women's relatives (in March, five months after the earthquake) at a government medical facility further confirmed sense of abuse and neglect suffered by patients and care-givers. This was especially the case with patients who had long-term health problems. Patients were discharged if they were not able to pay for the services. Government compensation in case of serious injuries was much lower than the actual costs involved. Many of them had not been able to claim government funded reimbursements for medical charges. This was especially the case when men were the ones who had sustained injuries, as women were than looking after them, and did not know government channels for monetary reimbursements. However, even men mentioned their lack of time and energy to run after money at a time when family members were in such acute conditions. Patients who needed to seek further medical assistance were worried about accommodation in Islamabad, as a majority of them were from AJK, and had no means to pay for hotels and rent a place.

2.8 Compensatory Policies Discriminated against Women

In NWFP, the horrendously patriarchal and highly conservative religious norms created difficulties for women being seen or heard in the public sphere. This worked to the detriment of women-friendly relief assistance, especially in NWFP. In the Kashmir area, the norms were slightly different, and did have an impact on relief services to some extent but no major differences could be seen in implementation of policies.

A particular issue of concern was that of national identity cards (NIC). Women in a number of places remarked about the general cultural norm of men not bothering about obtaining NIC for women, as it would 'expose' women to the public sphere and would allow women to have an identity independent of them. But after the earthquake, given that all aid was provided based on NICs, men were rushing to get them made for their women without airing any of their previous 'concerns'. The hypocrisy of the male attitude was criticised by women who felt misused on this particular count.

The government had announced compensatory packages for the earthquake affected people. For loss of a house, a total of Rs 1750,000 was to be distributed in three instalments. Beneficiary of compensation was the male head of the household who had to be married. The first instalment was to be of Rs 25,000, second Rs 100,000 and third Rs 50,000. At the time of the study no design models for reconstruction of houses had been provided yet. The reconstruction of homes was to be based on seismic designs, and the government was supposed to provide reconstruction design models but lack of these models and lack of future planning was criticised by numerous development agencies that needed policy guidelines to help the survivors in the reconstruction phase.

The compensation policy was implemented differently in AJK and in NWFP. In AJK, compensation was provided per destroyed house, irrespective of the number of households living under one roof. In NWFP, compensation was provided per family. So if a father and his three married sons lived in one house, compensation would be given to each of the four families (father + three sons). Unmarried sons could not claim this compensation. The open discrimination against AJK was heavily criticised and there were rumours that the policy would be changed to match the compensation in NWFP.

The compensation schemes were open to abuse by the feudal and government elites. The earthquake survivors had to bribe government officials to receive compensation money they had full eligibility. In NWFP, it was well known that the feudal elites known as *khans* were collecting the Rs 25,000 for themselves. A government body representative, known as *nazims*, had to verify authenticity of the claimant. For verification of a claimant, a certain amount of the cheque had to be given to those who had authority over the issuance of the cheque.

Not all of those who had lost their homes have been compensated. In general, community members, NGO workers and others comment that 80% of the affected have received, at least, the preliminary instalment of Rs 25,000. In our sample of 125 households, 98 (78%) claimed that they would be compensated. Of these 98 households, 16% percent had not cashed their cheques.

For the loss of a family member Rs 100,000 was provided as a compensatory measure. The third compensatory package was on medical grounds and was given for 3 types of injuries: Rs 50,000 for amputations, Rs 25,000 and Rs 15,000 were for various medical conditions based on a number of conditionalities.

There was no compensation for people living in rented property; they were not given any compensation for loss of household goods. This policy discriminates against the most materially insecure people. In the aftermath of the earthquake, firstly, not much housing was left for rent, and secondly, rents had gone up and people were finding it difficult to get rental housing. Many of the people had set up tents in front of their destroyed homes and did not have any clear plans for the future.

A particular community in Bagh, which by caste are cleaners, had been living in government quarters. After the earthquake the community had moved to a space in front of their destroyed homes and was now living in tents. These people were given notice by the government authorities that they had to evacuate government land. They were concerned as there was little rental property available in Bagh and the rents were increasing daily.

A particular example of a single woman is given here to demonstrate the dominance of male heads of families and how compensatory packages were of little help to women. A woman government servant, who had been working as a cleaner died in the earthquake. Her compensatory cheque for Rs 100,000 was claimed by her son, who was married and lived separately with his family at the time of his mother's death and afterwards. The deceased woman had an unmarried daughter in her late teens, who, previously had been living with her mother and was now living with her married sister. This girl should actually have been the recipient of the compensatory money as it was her household that had been disrupted from her mother's death. If she had claims to this money, she could have been in a position to decide where she wanted to live, and not be totally dependant on the goodwill of her siblings to house her and look after all her needs.

There were many such cases in the communities where compensation from the death of parents was claimed by elder brothers and it is doubtful women, especially single women, would be able to use this money for their benefit. It is possible that in the coming years they will be made to feel totally beholden for the food and shelter provided by other family members. There were constant claims made by government officials as well as community members that in the Pakistan society women should not live on their own as they feel insecure. However, the reality is that women do not want to live on their own mainly because they are afraid of being molested by men who consider independent women open for sexual advances.

Another twist to the issue of compensatory policies was the embedded male bias. For instance, with respect to compensatory cheques given for the loss of a home, only married males were compensated. A widowed woman mentioned that although she had been able to get the cheque for herself, her married daughter's claim who had been living with her mother after her marriage, was not granted. Hence the local authorities were not willing to accept the daughter's claim on her household, although thousands of similar claims by sons were immediately honoured by the government officials.

The government policy of providing relief for damaged or destroyed homes on the basis of marital status led to forced marriages. All married men were being termed responsible for a single family and hence were being compensated by an initial payment of Rs 25,000. In order to access this compensation, many young boys were married hurriedly to older women, and older men were marrying young girls. In either case it was atrocious, but one needs to remember that Islam accepts polygamy and hence young boys would retain the right to marry again whereas women who had been forced into marriage had no other choice but to accept and live out these decisions.

2.9 Loss of Livelihood Sources

According to the International Labour Organisation, there had been a loss of 1.1 million jobs, as a result of the earthquake. There had been a heavy loss of livestock and agricultural implements that constitute capital assets of rural communities. According to reports, 250,000 animals were killed in the earthquake. These were also the providers of milk, yogurt and butter, and lack of milk in the earthquake region was acutely felt by the families with children. The loss of livestock for women means a loss of a source of livelihood as well as nutrition. Women, often the owners and caretakers of livestock, draw their livelihood from these resources. There were reports of sales of animals as

people are unable to look after their animals in the face of such massive loss of human life, lack of shelter for humans as well as animals, and lack of fodder. The loss of livestock is further exacerbated by "forced" sales of livestock affects women's ability to sustain themselves and their families.

Some of the larger organised camps had specific space allocated for livestock which the earthquake affected people had brought with them. In two of these camps, it was observed that although community members were looking after their livestock, they did not have control over the milk from them. Army personnel would allow them to access milk once in maybe two or three days. Milk was such a needed food item, especially for women with young children, but even then they were not allowed access to milk which was from their own livestock. Widows in the tent camps reported having sold their animals at cheap rates. According to one woman, she had nobody in the household who could look after her animals so she ended up selling two buffaloes, and calves just for Rs 5,000. In addition, there was a heavy loss of livestock in any case. A number of women reported losing buffaloes, oxen and cows, all critical tools for agricultural production and daily sustenance for an agrarian community.

Vocational Programmes

A number of camp sites were providing vocational training for women. By and large, the only type of training at hand seemed to be sewing classes. Women would come for certain hours and learn to cut and sew. However, in a number of centres, not all sewing machines were working. At one camp, women had been promised that at the end of the course they would be given sewing machines and had enrolled for this reason. Some had been able to get the sewing machines and others not. This was based on the number of donated machines and later the NGO had run out of sewing machines. Another issue faced by NGOs running these centres was a greater number of women who wanted to come but due to less number of sewing machines available all women were not able to enrol in the programs.

It was also found that many of the traumatised women were not accessing such opportunities. They would mention their lack of focus, energy and the will to put their mind to learning. Another important critical question was the need for men to earn a living to support their families. For women, who were now heads of the household, it was another pressing question; however, a majority had no job skills which would allow them to become economically productive so that they could provide for themselves and their dependants.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER SENSITIVE DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The lessons learnt from the study of the relief assistance to the women affected by the October 8, 2005 earthquake are rooted in our understanding of the patriarchal, elitist society. It is unfortunate to state that the findings bring to light the many practices and norms which discriminate against women and were the basis of the government policies and procedures of the relief and rehabilitation processes.

In light of the above information and analysis of the relief operations carried out in the aftermath of the earthquake, a number of issues should be addressed to ensure women's needs are addressed and their human rights are protected and fulfilled during disasters.

The first critical step in bringing about any meaningful change is a long-term sustained anti-patriarchy campaign which would eliminate the root cause of patriarchal elitist policies discriminating against women.

The more immediate changes which need to be addressed include:

Global Response

- An international women's disaster response agency needs to be created which would reach out to disaster hit areas and provide advisory assistance for gender sensitive disaster management to governments of the affected country and aid agencies involved in relief and rehabilitation activities.
- A standardised manual which focuses on the type of assistance for women is a critical need which would allow disaster teams to, at least, provide basic assistance immediately.
- Women-focused disaster management policies need to be mainstreamed into international government and non-government agencies who take a primary role in disaster management.
- Patriarchal institutions such as armed forces should only play a role in rescue relief operations at the first stage of disaster response. All management of relief operations, especially with respect to camp management and relief distribution needs to be managed by peoples' organisations, with at least 50% women's representation.

National Response

- In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, gender balanced disaster relief committees should be set up which would focus on women's needs for providing relief to disaster-hit communities.
- Training of disaster relief committees need to be carried out with respect to assessing women's needs in a disaster situation.

Specific Interventions

- Food aid needs to be culture specific and vary in kind: people cannot be expected to eat instant noodles everyday for several months. Women's groups need to be at the centre of planning, implementation and management of food aid.
- Basic food aid, including milk and sugar, should be provided regularly until disaster affected people start earning income to sustain themselves. For families with children, especially infants, milk should be a must food item. In addition, vulnerable categories especially pregnant women, widows, elderly and children without mothers need to be provided food aid until economic security for these groups has been ensured.
- Food aid needs to be provided through humane distribution mechanisms without people made to feel that they are beholden to, or have to beg camp management for food.
- Women should be encouraged to access aid directly. Aid distribution points should have basic facilities such as toilets, water and shaded sitting areas.
- In conservative societies with gender segregation practices separate queues should be available for women for easy access to aid and their comfort levels at aid distribution points.

Camp Management

- Camp management committees composed of women should be created to ensure women's safety. Written and verbal safety guidelines should be provided to be further developed by committees themselves against possible violations against women and children. Women should be trained to create immediate alarm against violations on the camp sites.
- Night guards should be maintained at camp sites. The guards (it is presumed guards will be men but need not be) should be trained to be sensitive to women's apprehensions and maintain a body language which makes them available for assistance-seeking women, instead of being perceived as possible violators.
- Camp grounds need to be managed to provide safe walking area against rain and snow, as well as against perpetrators.
- Public areas, such as pathways, washroom areas and playgrounds must be well-lit to ensure easy and safe access for women, the elderly and children.
- Affected people must be consulted about the time and process of closing camps and temporary shelters. Women should be central to this dialogue and should have ample information and time to move. The burden of packing and getting organised is normally basic responsibility of women and they need time to plan according to the needs of their families.

- Separate toilets and bathing rooms for women should be provided at any camp site.
- Toilets and bathrooms need to be located not far from the living quarters and well lit so that women can access them day and night without fear of being harassed.
- Material used for toilets and bathrooms need to be proof against easy tampering.
- Special efforts must be made to ensure tent distribution to widows, single women, male-headed households which have physical or mental disabilities and the elderly, through direct door-to-door service.
- Tents need to be developed with more secure fastenings so that it would provide some sense of security to women.
- Old-style tents with slanting sides need to be phased out as they leave no space for mobility. The newer tents with ventilation facilities need to be promoted. Cooling and heating mechanisms need to be developed for maintaining temperatures inside the tents. Otherwise they can be very cold in winter and very hot in summer and tents are the primary space occupied by women.
- Built-in storage space should be part of tents for bedding and clothes to keep them safe from getting wet or spoilt.

Access to Health Services

- Trauma care centres need to be a primary focus of all relief assistance policies, for men, women and children.
- Traumatized women, especially those who had lost their husbands and children, need to be given special attention, including motivating them to come out to join a larger community. Support groups from the camp sites should be formed to assist external health workers.
- Pregnant women and women with newly born babies should be provided special attention through trained health professionals. Women health workers should be part of every camp and provide door-to-door visits.
- Medical aid compensatory packages should be broadly publicised and be given directly at medical centres, as families with affected household members find it difficult to access medical aid during the crisis period. A trigger mechanism should be set at medical aid facilities itself which would allow health workers to identify and help needed beneficiaries. Women with disabilities should be moved to special care centres equipped with facilities for disabled people. In any case, they should not be forced to live in tent camps.

Compensatory Packages

- Compensatory packages need to be planned in accordance to the special needs of women, especially vulnerable groups such as widows, single women, and women with disabilities or women who have men in the household with disabilities. In addition, patriarchal practices and norms need to be well understood and policies need to be developed to prevent discrimination against women based on patriarchal norms.
- Specifically, when granting cash compensations, mechanisms need to be created where recipient women would be the sole authority who would have control over the compensation money. Long-term follow up mechanisms need to be developed which would allow women's groups to ensure that benefits go to the actual beneficiaries.
- If married sons are made eligible to compensation, such as compensation for house damages, married daughters living with parents should be given the same rights.
- New policies made in the aftermath of disasters should break existing patriarchal norms. For instance, land given in place of land lost to disaster, should provide space for joint ownership between husband and wife, rather than giving full claims only to the (male) head of the household.
- Women's groups should use the space created after disasters to break the old patriarchal norms and educate women about their human rights: from right to have national identity cards, separate bank accounts to land rights.

Shelters for Women

- Women's shelters must be operated by women. Control over women's groups by men, especially by the Armed Forces is not acceptable.
- Women – residents should be consulted and involved in all decision making processes.
- Single males should not be provided space in shelters made for women and their families. Adult males even if they are part of the family should not be given living space within shelters.
- Women's shelters should be open to visitors and women should be able to reach out to others who would like to be of assistance. This issue remains a problem because many exploitative groups can also access women, but a safe and secure environment needs to be ensured for women.

Livelihood Opportunities for Women

- Beneficiaries should have complete information and knowledge of the policies and programmes developed for their use and benefit. They should be given

exposure to the opportunities offered to them. Otherwise, if asked in a vacuum, many women do not have the experience or information to be able to access various opportunities such as vocational training.

- New challenging vocational training needs to be provided along with conventional vocations such as livestock breeding, sewing and stitching.



Annex 1

Tent Camps included in the Study

Islamabad (Federal Capital)

- 1.H 11
- 2.Timari Chowk

NWFP

3. Meera Camp, Shangla District
4. Jawa Camp, Mansehra District
5. Al –Khubab Women’s Shelter, Mansehra District
6. Maidan Camp, Balakot District
7. Bisyan Camp, Balakot District
8. Helping Hands, Mansehra District (Spontaneous)
9. Mandiar Khan Muslim Hands, Mansehra District (Spontaneous)

Azad Jammu and Kashmir

10. Al-Mustafa Thori Camp, Muzaffarabad District (Organized)
11. Sarbuland Shelter Home for Women, Bagh District (Organized)
12. Al-Mustafa Network, Malikpura, Muzaffarabad District
13. Diwan Camp, Muzaffarabad District
14. Hussainabad Muslim Hands, Bagh District
15. Hussainabad Helping Hands, Bagh District
16. Qadirabad, Bagh District
17. Stadium Narhol, Muzaffarabad District
18. Benazir Village, Muzaffarabad District
19. Al Sheikh, Muzaffarabad District
20. Lower Jinnah Camp, Muzaffarabad District
21. Jamat-e-Islami Camp, Muzaffarabad District

Annex 2

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