



GRACE ASSOCIATION · PAKISTAN
THE GRASSROOTS' ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 02/2009

July - December 2009

GRACE won
the UNV
Volunteering
Award 2009



SOUTH WAZIRISTAN CALAMITY

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The Voice of Grassroots

02/2009 | July - December 2009

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Editorial Board

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Senior Editor	Maria Reich
Editor	Nicole Lim
Reporters	Evelin Nõmmiste Muhammad Qasim
Art Director	Yvonne Nelson
Assistant Designer	Anwer Ali
Images	Archive GRACE Wikimedia Commons MorgeFiles Alissa Everett

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EDITORIAL



Dear Readers,

The Voice of Grassroots is GRACE's biannual newsletter and the 2nd issue of 2009. The goal of this newsletter is to highlight grassroots community issues and seek sustainable solutions through advocacy, linkage development, and partnerships. It provides a platform for communication between grassroots communities, community-based organizations, NGOs, online volunteers, researchers, development practitioners, and government executives, and facilitates the sharing of indigenous knowledge and information around the globe.

This issue presents contemporary social issues and challenges together with GRACE's activities and events, inspiring success stories and funding opportunities for grassroots organizations.

The Editorial Board warmly welcomes articles and news from other organizations. Volunteers can publish and disseminate the newsletter through emails and hard copies among donors, writers and indigenous communities at grassroots level. Because all experiences and lessons are valuable -especially to communities in the less developed parts of the country- the voice of the middle-low and at the grassroots level are crucial for the country's development. We thus hereby strongly encourage you to share your expertise with us.

Thank you.

Khadim Hussain
Managing Director

GRACE has adopted two core values,
including Social Justice & Equity
(rights, vulnerability, and access)
and Democracy
(participation, transparency,
accountability, rules and regulations)
for its institutional norms and
programmatic operations.
Its programs are run through the strategic
principles of social mobilization,
volunteerism, advocacy,
human rights,
partnership building and networking.

ABOUT GRACE

The Grassroots Association for Community Empowerment (GRACE Association Pakistan) is a non government and non profit organization (NPO) registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) under section 42 of the Companies' Ordinance 1984. The organization has developed into a regionally and nationally recognized, independently governed sustainable institution from a grassroots initiative taken almost one and half decade ago as a seven children's grassroots campaign for female education. Areas of interventions have flourished from education and health to agriculture, environment, natural resource management, ecotourism, water and sanitation, humanitarian assistance and livelihood. The overall strategic framework of the organization is anchored in the concept of sustainable development, enhanced outreach to the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups and communities and replication of best practices.

GRACE Vision

GRACE's efforts contribute to a world which recognizes, respects, and values the socioeconomic, political, legal and environmental aspirations of marginalized and vulnerable communities particularly women and children on equality basis to promote a sustainable, equitable prosperous and peaceful society.

GRACE Mission

GRACE Association endeavors to empower and improve the quality of life of the marginalized and vulnerable communities through welfare, participatory research and development, capacity building, promotion of best practices and partnership building, advocacy, and by launching sustainable and replicable innovative projects.

GRACE Values, Strategic Principles, Interventions and Objective

GRACE has adopted two core values including Social

Justice & Equity (rights, vulnerability, and access) and democracy (participation, transparency, accountability, rules and regulations) for its institutional norms and programmatic operations. Its programs are run through the strategic principles of social mobilization, volunteerism, advocacy, human rights, partnership building and networking.

The conceptual designs and the implementation framework of all the programs and projects follows a set of strategic interventions including; education and awareness, human and institutional development (HID), equitable community development, participatory planning and implementation, gender and diversity empowerment and local resource mobilization. All endeavors are steered to achieve the following objectives:

- Promotion of quality education, early childhood care and development and inclusive education.
- Building and strengthening human and institutional development through training, skills enhancement and education etc.
- Enhancing the access of marginalized and deprived communities particularly of least developed parts of the country to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, education, health, prevention of HIV/AIDs and economic development opportunities.
- Mainstreaming of most marginalized, extremely vulnerable and socially excluded groups and populations like peoples with disabilities in development
- Undertaking initiatives for the reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the displaced populations affected by disasters.

Shamshad Hussain

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN IDP'S CALAMITY APPEAL

October 17th 2009- the Pakistanis Army launched a military operation in South Waziristan. Communication lines in the conflict area have been cut off since, displacing thousands of people. A desperate plea for help.

Thousands of inhabitants of the conflict-affected areas continue to flee to neighboring districts including Dera Ismail Khan and Tank in the southern area of the North West Frontier Province and are currently seeking refuge with friends and family within the local communities. The UN reports that 100,000 new internally displaced people (IDPs) have reached Dera Ismail Khan and Tank. More than 80,000 people have already taken refuge in these areas since May, having been displaced by smaller outbreaks of conflict, including that from North Waziristan.

GRACE's response:

Members of GRACE report that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Waziristan can only sustain themselves for a short time given the limited provisions they were able to carry with them. Basic relief assistance is thus vital. The inadequate supply of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities also act as factors threatening the health of these migrants. As winter approaches, the availability of heat and shelter will also become an increasing concern.

Members of GRACE within the IDPs camp areas are looking into helping them by means of any available resources. With the support of relief organizations, appropriate security measures are currently being undertaken by staff and partners.

GRACE is skilled in the field of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and has extensive experience supporting IDPs conflict-affected areas. Being dependent on external support, GRACE has the potential to mobilized

hygiene kits, basic family non-food item kits and blankets for 5,000 up to families. Simultaneously, GRACE hopes to provide safe drinking water to hundreds of IDPs through communal hand pumps, along with sanitation support through latrines, bathing places and washing points.



If you wish to help, GRACE ASSOCIATION PAKISTAN is accepting donations.

- **Account number** 1321
- **Bank name** MCB Bank Limited
- **Bank address** Abpara Market Branch
0597, Hameed Chamber,
Islamabad
- **Bank telegraphic address** MUSCAP BANK

Please feel free to donate to other organizations involved in relief activities as well.

Thank you!



Thousands of inhabitants of the conflict-affected areas continue to flee to neighboring districts including Dera Ismail Khan and Tank in the southern area of the North West Frontier Province



ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS



'Art Roots' was designed to help children nurture their skills and enhance their imagination and creativity.

In July 2009, I received the opportunity to work with the GRACE team- an organization working for the betterment of society and the improvement of the quality of life within rural communities. Since there were a hundred students studying in Grace Public School, Astana, I had planned to select children based on their skills; but after discovering their immense love and passion for drawing and sketching, I decided to work with all the children instead.

Picasso once said, "All children are artists". I believe the best artists portray things as how they are observed. There is innocence and dedication in their work. The program was very exciting and was a great learning opportunity for me. It was my greatest experience with children. Art Roots is not just a workshop -it shaped our communities for learning and education.

Art Roots Workshop 2009

by Anwer Ali

Skardu July 17th – 20th 2009

The Art and Creativity workshop was conducted to enhance the art and craft skills of children in the mountainous region of Baltistan. The four-day program was held at Grace Public School Skardu with the coordination of GRACE Association Pakistan.

The workshop aimed to provide children with an opportunity to express their observations, dreams, fantasies and skills. The focus of the workshop was on group activities rather than the conveyance of instructions as with convention.

Group exercises and interactive ac-

tivities helped the children express their ideas and gain confidence. GRACE even plans to exhibit some of the art works of the children.

The workshop served as a good opportunity for children to

- Express their creativity.
- Learn about basic shapes and drawing techniques.
- Learn to use art materials.
- Develop an eye for nature, materials and different objects.
- Work in groups and establish a helpful environment.
- Use their imagination and experience freedom of expression.

Based on such a successful experience, GRACE will be able to enhance its expertise in childhood care and developmental programs.

‘Communities in remote areas like District Skardu have no access to the study of the English language due to their poor economy, lack of access to opportunities, and little attention from the federal government’

GRACE Endeavors for English Access Program for Skardu

English is not only the official language of Pakistan but also the universal language for business management, commerce and trade. It is also a vital tool in communication, understanding different cultures and values around the world. But communities in remote areas like District Skardu have no access to the study of the English language due to their poor economy, lack of access to opportunities, and little attention from the federal government.

Keeping in view the need of communities in Skardu Baltistan, Grace Association Pakistan is about to partner the US Embassy Islam-

abad, and the Office of English Language Programs, Washington DC in the English Access Micro Scholarship Program (for two years) to run at Grace Public School, Skardu after school hours.

The program will address three main areas:

1. The lack of exposure to the English language: Students will develop the language skills with emphasis on listening comprehension and aural communication. The program will make use of age and interest-orientated activities. The program seeks to expose students to the language in real-life context to prepare students for effective communication with native and non-native speakers of the English

language. A sound knowledge of the language will build confidence within students in carrying out conversations, better prepare them for further education, and sequence in the thought process.

2. Culture: A key element of the program is to familiarize students with important features of the U.S. culture. Students are encouraged to develop respect for and interest in other cultures, customs and beliefs.

3. Personal Development: Various elements of the program will foster students’ personal development aimed at working towards a balanced intellectual and emotional development focusing on character building, career counseling, confidence and patience so students will be better prepared when assuming an active role in their communities.

Initial dialogues with Mr. Shahid Waseem, Director of the American Information Resource Center, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Islamabad, had been conducted in September 2009 and a formal meeting with Ms. Joelle Uzarski, Regional English Language Officer, New Delhi had been held with other Access partners at US Embassy Islamabad in October 2009.



'GRACE believes that education is a tool for social change and our aim is to develop the school as a model of inclusive education in the region'

The program will benefit 14 to 16 year-old adolescents studying at government or private secondary schools in Skardu. Participants will be selected from economically disadvantaged backgrounds through set procedures. The program is expected to run in January or March 2010.

Government of Japan Funds "GRACE Water Supply Astana Skardu 2009"

GRACE Receives US\$90,262.00 Grant from the Government of Japan for Water Supply. GRACE received a grant from the Government of Japan for a water supply project to provide safe drinking water through the provision of water supply system to the residents

of Astana Bala, Astana paen, Gultri colony and Brolumo colony in Skardu.

The grant of US\$90,262 for the project "Female Social Empowerment through 4 Kilometers Potable Water for Displaced People Astana Skardu" was received under the Government of Japan Official Development Assistance program "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects".

The agreement was signed between H.E Mr. Chihiro Atsumi, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and GRACE Chief Executive Officer Wazir Shamshad Hussain in the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on November 4, 2009.

The overall objective of the project

is to improve the quality of life of the displaced population, particularly women and female children by providing clean drinking water to the 12,750 people in the target villages. This will be achieved by the installation of 4 kilometer pipelines that can fulfill the water needs of the villages.

The provision of safe drinking water at their doorstep will reduce the workload of females, who currently spend around 5-6 hours a day fetching water. Furthermore, it will contribute to the social empowerment of women by mobilizing them in water management committees and increasing their participation in socioeconomic development activities.

The anticipated outcome would be increased awareness and involvement of women in home based economic activities and the enrollment of girls in schools which will positively impact female literacy, participation and empowerment. Consumption of safe drinking water will also improve the general health conditions of the communities, reducing the incidence of water born diseases, infant mortality and morbidity.

At the signing ceremony the Ambassador H.E Mr. Chihiro Atsumi expressed his great appreciation



'The provision of safe drinking water will contribute to the social empowerment of women by mobilizing them in water management committees and increasing their participation in socioeconomic development activities'

for GRACE's efforts to improve the living standards of disadvantaged communities in remote areas of Pakistan and showed his interest to continue working with GRACE in the near future. He emphasized that this project would contribute to further strengthen bilateral relations between Japan and Pakistan.

Mr. Khadim Hussain, Founder Grace Association Pakistan and CEO of GRACE, Wazir Shamshad Hussain expressed their gratitude to their Japanese counterparts in community development activities in Pakistan, especially in disadvantaged regions like Baltistan. He invited the Ambassador to visit Skardu, to which he accepted. The Government of Japan also provided financial assistance for construction of GRACE Public School Skardu in 2008.

GRACE Continues Seeking Partnership with British Council Pakistan

*October 14, 2009
Islamabad*

Grace Association Pakistan, under its Educational Development Program has established a public school in Skardu for more than 100 female and male students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The students include indigenous and displaced children and children

with disabilities. GRACE believes that education is a tool for social change and our aim is to develop the school as a model of inclusive education in the region.

According to the Chairman of GRACE, one of its main challenges was enhancing the quality of education at Grace Public School Skardu, particularly the teaching of the English language. The organization strongly acknowledges the efforts of the British Council with regards to its educational programs and thus seeks its partnership and looks forward to partnering the British Council in achieving mutual goals and objectives within the region.

GRACE is currently seeking the British Council for a partnership in its program *English for Teaching: Teaching for English* (ETTE) as well as other programs run by the British Council Pakistan. GRACE hopes that in partnering the British Council, the Association can help with the advancement and educa-

tion of parents and children in one of many forgotten areas of the world.



GRACE / PPAF dialogue for poverty reduction in rural villages

GRACE is currently seeking a partnership with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) for community development and empowerment in the Gilgit Baltistan region to promote community based collective enterprise developmental projects underpinning business plans for poverty reduction.

The project would emphasize on the introduction and establishment of collective and sustainable management of livestock premised on market-oriented demand based production systems which will lead to increased production, enhanced productivity and marketing, consequently, increasing the income of the farmers, reduce poverty and increase their quality of life. The concept has been developed while keeping in view the local cultural



'The people of Haripur are currently in dire situations with respect to better health, water, sanitation and infrastructure services- particularly in the health segment'

and socioeconomic norms and conditions of the indigenous communities in the target region.

GRACE continuous follow ups have resulted in PPAF's consideration and enhanced their interest in partnering Grace Association Pakistan. This partnership will go to enable GRACE to introduce a systemic method of livestock farming that ensures better management and improved production at a large scale vis-à-vis establishing a system of controlled/rotational livestock grazing in the highland as well as in the low land pastures that would safeguard the rehabilitation of the environment and ecosystem through conservation approaches. This, again, would be a model system that does not exist in the target region.

Villagers in Basu Mera and Panian Haripur Facing Disaster Risks and Safe Drinking Water

August 10, 2009

By Khadim Hussain

Haripur, formerly a military cantonment, was renamed in honor of the Sikh general Hari Singh Nalwa in 1822 and became the headquarters of Hazara (until 1853). Haripur was initially constructed as a fortress surrounded by a wall measuring 4 yards (3.7 m) in width and 16 yards (15 m) in height and had only four



openings. The fort was later converted into the city police station.

Haripur is a green valley, rich in fruits and vegetables and serves as the base market for the mountainous cities of Abbottabad and Mansehra and rest of the Hazara Division. The majority of the population of Haripur speak Hindko which is combination of multiple languages including Punjabi, Potohari, Gojri and Urdu. Haripur is small but beautiful city of the Hazara division. To the south of Haripur lies the ancient Buddhist university town of Taxila. And to its north, is the world's largest Rockfilled Dam, the Tarbela Dam, the bulwark of Pakistan's power generation and irrigation system. To its south lies the picturesque Khanpur dam which supplies drinking water to Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

GRACE Association Pakistan conducted a survey on the demand of GRACE Volunteers in Haripur. GRACE carried out community consultative meetings and dia-

logues with the communities for identification and assessment of problems within in Haripur from the 16th of July to the 4th of August 2009.

Survey results showed that part of the Union's Council is Panian, hosting thousands of Afghan refugees for the past 30 years. The inhabitants are currently dismayed over the rapidly decreasing natural resources due to the pressure of a huge population. Panian is further divided into four sections, of which the total population number would add up to 21,600 while the population size of Afghan refugees is approximately 124,058 according to recently acquired statistics.

Another village where a detailed survey was conducted was Basu Mera, in Union Council Deendhan, consisting of Basu Mera native villages and Basu Mera Refugee Village. Five other villages namely Baillgran, -Khatona Mera, Machi Killay, Nara, Mohrian and Rakh also fall within the hosting communities situated within the surroundings of Basu Mera refugee village. The village is 16 km away from Haripur City. The population size of the village is approximately 12600, including 6000 locals and 6600 Afghan refugees.

According to the statistical analy-

'In Haripur, the literacy rate is approximately 40% for males and 25% for females '

sis, the population size fell within the different economic categories i.e. 35% fall in low income families (Rs.3000 per month); 45% earn up to Rs.5000 and only 30% earn more than Rs.5000/- per month. Almost 60% derive their livelihoods from subsistence farming. 60% own less than 5 acres of land; 10% own 10 acres; 15% of the population has up to 15 acres (per household) and 17% possessed more than 15 acres of land. The communities also have small number of mix live-stock herd.

The people are currently in dire situations with respect to better health, water, sanitation and infrastructure services- particularly in the health segment. As much as the Government has provided tube well water for drinking and other domestic needs, according to reports by BHU Panian 70% of the visiting patients from Panian and surrounding villages of Haripur are suffered in water born diseases.

The literacy rate is approximately 40% for males and 25% for females. Energy needs rise during winter both in terms of fuel and food and 85% of the population depend on fuel wood for energy. 15% use LPG Cylinders.

In Basu Mera Village, the road leading to the village passes

through a flooded stream that is typically blocked during rainy days and monsoon seasons. There is no alternative route for the Basu Mera communities including the refugee village when it is blocked. The problem has been identified by the communities and Afghan refugees in their collective meeting with Grace Association. They are in dire need for the construction of a causeway and protective walls to protect their agricultural lands, homes and to provide them with a safer and permanent route for transportation even when it rains.

Grace Association Pakistan hereby seeks support to resolve the issues mentioned above within communities in Haripur.

Ms. Evelin Nõmmiste of Estonia Volunteering at GRACE Communities

*October 28, 2009
By Khadim Hussain*

Evelin Nõmmiste, a 25-year old young woman from a European country, studying for a Master's degree in Development Management was interested in volunteering in Pakistan and chose GRACE Association Pakistan after browsing the internet for opportunities. GRACE Association accepted her application after she provided the necessary documentation and



provided her board and lodging with a family in Skardu for two and half months.

GRACE is grateful for her collaboration with its staff members on official documentation, the organization of women, directing community meetings to establish women water management committees in the Astana Village of Skardu and reviewing project proposals.

She liked working with communities in the rural villages of Pakistan and records her interesting observations on the Your Observation page of this Newsletter.

GRACE Supports Establishment of the Water Supply Astana Skardu 2009 Project

*November 16, 2009
By Muhammad Qasim*

GRACE Association Pakistan started the implementation of the GRACE Water Supply Astana Skardu Project funded by the

'The project aims at providing safe drinking water to 1,275 households of the local Astana Bala and Astana Paeen Communities and displaced families from Brolmo and Gulatari Colonies'



Japanese Embassy in Pakistan on November 4, 2009. The project cost was Rs.7.23 Millions.

The project, which promotes social empowerment of women through giving them the opportunity to actively take part in planning and management activities, aims at providing safe drinking water to 1,275 households of the local Astana Bala and Astana Paeen Communities including 667 displaced families from the Indian Pakistan border during the Wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999.

A meeting was conducted at the GRACE Program Office in Skardu from November 15 – 16, 2009 to discuss responsibilities and to sign a Memorandum of Understandings (MoU). Twenty six village elders, clergy, and local politicians from the four project villages participated in the meeting. The Village Water Committee (VWC) which consists of nine members had been constituted earlier and the selected members were confirmed at the meeting.

The MoU was signed by all village elders including Syed Muhammad Abbas Rzivi, former member of the Gilgit Baltistan Assembly, Mr. Ghulam Nabi, lawyer and former Technocrat member of the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly, District Skardu, and Wazir Ghulam Abbas, member of the District Council Skardu.

In the signed MoU, the VWC and the village elders agreed to provide all unskilled labor needed to complete the project as community contribution as well as the implementation of permanent water supply connections and pipe stands for the dislocated population in Brolmo Colony and Gultary Colony. The Elders also agreed to establish Women Water Committees (WWC) in each project village.

It has also been agreed that the collection and management of the tariff fee of Rs.20/- per household per month would be done by the WWCs after the implementation phase to assure sustainability. GRACE Association will hold a week long capacity building workshop in the near future to provide the women in the WWCs with the necessary knowledge and skills.

GRACE Association also carried out social mobilization meetings in the four villages for men and

women separately. A Village Water Committee established in Brolmo Colony monitors progress and need of said colony. Members of the Women Water Committees in each project village have been selected in the meetings.

The communities decided to start the digging and laying of pipe works when the materials are provided at project sites.

GRACE Association is intending to complete 50% of the project during the winter as most of the villages' men work in the market for daily wages to meet their needs during spring and summer.



GRACE Organizes Workshop for Women on "How to Vote" in Preparation of the First Gilgit Baltistan Assembly Election 2009

November 10, 2009

By Evelin Nõmmiste

Prior to the Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly Elections 2009,

'GRACE sensitized women to voice up for their rights and also for their problems when parties' representatives come to their villages'

GRACE gave its contribution to the conduction of fair and free elections by holding two polling workshops for women.

The workshops were held on November 10th in Brolmo Colony Madrassa and November 11th in Kwardu Al`Zahra Girls Middle School. The first workshop was attended by approximately 80 – 90 village women, the second workshop had around 40 – 50 participants.

During previous elections in the region, nearly half of the votes cast by women have been declared invalid due to low awareness of the proper way to stamp the ballot paper. The most common mistakes made by women in stamping in previous elections have been stamping on the lines and double-stamping. Women are also often being misled by opposing parties' agents to vote for a candidate they did not choose themselves.

GRACE was trying to reduce the number of invalid ballot papers in these elections by showing village women the proper way to stamp their ballot papers. GRACE Public School teachers Aneela, Maryam, Tahira, Samina and GRACE volunteer Ms Evelin Nõmmiste were demonstrating how to stamp the card in a proper way. The women

also had a chance to practice the stamping of polling cards themselves.

As part of the workshop, women also had the possibility to address their questions and concerns to GRACE. Discussions with village women revealed that the awareness of the free and fair elections is very low. Many women go to the polling stations just because it is a tradition and they vote for candidates as advised by their husbands. GRACE sensitized them to voice up for their rights and also for their problems when parties' representatives come to their villages.

The impact of the workshop was quick and wonderful. The women who attended the polling workshop did not make any foul vote this year as reported by the polling station agents whereas during previous elections, 20% of the women votes were counted as foul votes at the same polling station.

GRACE Public School Holds Annual Result Announcement Ceremony

December 11, 2009

By Evelin Nõmmiste

On December 11, 2009, GRACE Public School Skardu held its Result Announcement Ceremony

to mark the end of the school year 2009. The occasion brought students, parents, teachers and guests together.

The ceremony was held after the annual examinations. During the ceremony, students with outstanding results in each class were awarded. The special guests of the day were the chief guest GRACE Volunteer, Ms. Evelin Nõmmiste, the President of the Ceremony, Professor Ghulam Hussain, the CEO of GRACE Association Pakistan, Mr. Shamshad Hussain, and Mr. Muhammad Hassan Soharab.

Professor Hussain stressed the importance of a quality education and the value of highly qualified teachers in delivering education during his speech. He reminded parents that sending children to school is has a tremendous effect on future generations' lives.

As part of the ceremony, GRACE Public School teacher Ms Samina received the "Best Teacher Performance Award" based on her students' achievements in the annual exams.

GRACE is thankful for Mr. Yakov from Anjum Photos, Mr. Wazir Basharat Ali, and Mr. Zahid Hussain for their contribution and donations for the ceremony.

'The women's training program was started in coordination with HGC Japan. It was an initiation towards establishing a Technical Training Institute (T.T.I) for women of the area'

GRACE Joins Rehabilitation International

December 2, 2009

By Ghazala Hameed

11-12 November 2009 - Dubai

The Rehabilitation International Conference - RI (Arab Region) was held in Dubai on November 11th and 12th. At the conference, issues relating to the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were discussed. Working on these issues will require collaboration of different organizations in Pakistan. We look forward to your suggestions in this regard.

The Assembly approved the nomination of GRACE Association as a National Member Organization and joined into the fold of organizations working on issues related to disability.

Women Vocational Training Certificate Award Ceremony

November 17, 2009

By Khadim Hussain

Women in remote rural areas are mainly confined to household activities. Traditionally they hardly play any role in direct income generation for the family. However, if women get an opportunity to support the family income, it seems provide great financial relief



to their families.

To provide this opportunity, GRACE Association Pakistan worked with the Himalayan Green Club Japan to establish a vocational centre for women in April 2009 at Grace Public School Skardu.

The centre was opened to train women of Astana and neighboring villages in "Cutting and Sewing of Children's and Women's Dresses". The target audience is mostly poor and illiterate, but it is clear that the women enjoy not just learning a new skill, but the chance to be away from their housework, children and family in a different, supportive and friendly environment.

Upon completion of the 6-months training course, the women received a certificate during a program held at GRACE Public School Skardu on November 17th. Twenty five women completed the training successfully. Two instructors were hired to teach the course, Ms Zakia Nisar Khan and Ms Zeban

Muhammad. All the women were very happy about their successful completion of the course.

At the event, Ms Zakia Nisar Khad said that the women will use the learnt skills for themselves as well as in order to help their families economically. It will empower them in society. She thanked GRACE Association Pakistan for providing this opportunity to enhance income generating skills for women of remote villages.

A trainee representing all women said that they are highly interested in learning more skills in knitting and embroidery and many other women of the surrounding villages are looking for admission in this vocational centre. Therefore, GRACE Association should continue the centre during the winter season.

Mr. Khadim Hussain, Founder and Company Secretary Grace Association Pakistan stated that "this program was started in coordination with HGC Japan. It was just initiation towards establishing a Technical Training Institute (T.T.I) for women of the area." He further stated that GRACE is taking many other initiatives to make the society aware about the work of women and their important role to develop society.

'The Walk provided an opportunity for people with disabilities to voice up for their rights in Gilgit Baltistan, sensitize the people about the rights of people with disabilities and express solidarity with them'

He added that unemployment is a global challenge, but women can achieve self-dependency and employment at their door steps through skills enhancement. Ms Evelin Nõmmiste, an Estonian volunteer for GRACE, said: "I am very happy here working for women and I want to share my skills with you all."



GRACE Organizes Awareness Walk on World Disability Day

December 3, 2009

By Shamshad Hussain

GRACE Association Pakistan organized an Awareness Walk on World Disability Day in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Primary Healthcare Initiative Skardu, December 3, 2009, to provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to voice up for their rights in Gilgit Baltistan, sensitize the people about the rights of people with disabilities and to express solidarity with them.

The awareness walk started at

11:30 AM at GRACE Public School and made its way to Radio Pakistan Chowk Skardu. More than 1,200 people from different walks of life participated in the Walk. The Deputy Commissioner of Skardu, the District Health Officer, journalists, teachers, students, and representatives of Civil Society Organizations and CBOs warmly participated in the walk with people with disabilities.

Mr. Ghulam Ali appealed for inclusive education, rights of 2% quota given approved by the Government of Pakistan in employment, accessible public transport and ratification of the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities.

Mr. Muhammad Ali Yugvi, Deputy Commissioner Skardu, made his appreciation for the endeavors of GRACE Association, PPHI Skardu, and the World Disability Day celebration at District level, clear.

He announced an employment opportunity in his department for a deserving person with disability at the occasion. He further stated that he will provide warm clothes for persons with disabilities in Skardu as per the list of PWDs identified and given by GRACE Association Pakistan. He also said that District Government has allotted land for

the construction of a Rehabilitation Centre in Skardu for which the funding is being secured by the Federal Government.

The Chief Executive Officer of GRACE Association Pakistan, Mr. Wazir Shamshad Hussain, highlighted the issues of people with disabilities in the region.

Mr. Shamshad also shared the endeavors of GRACE for rehabilitation and development of people with disabilities in the country. He announced that the organization will refer and facilitate interested and persons with disabilities in need to visit HDF-Orthotics Prosthetics Centre, Physical Rehabilitation & Training Centre, Department of Physiotherapy at the Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi as HDF Project Director Dr. Irtaza Kazmi has offered their special services for patients from Gilgit Baltistan.

Mr. Basharat Hussain, Executive Monitoring and Evaluation, shared the efforts of PPHI staff to provide free healthcare to the people, especially for PWDs. He also highlighted responsibilities of people and organizations working with people with disabilities. "PPHI is working to prevent such accident by providing Polio Eradication Services, Mother and Child Healthcare, and IDD Program", he added.

GILGIT-BALTISTAN AUTONOMY

By M. Ismail Khan



The 'autonomy package' introduced by the government for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan is a mix of good and bad news. The good news is that the area will now have an autonomous status with a chief minister and a governor. The bad news is that it has been given only a province-like status and has no institutional link with the four provinces or the Pakistani constitution.

It is not yet clear how the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009 will affect the area's denizens and other stakeholders. What is obvious is that this is a new experiment in statecraft where a democratically elected government has created a province-like entity through an order.

Prime Minister Gilani's statement that Gilgit-Baltistan cannot be given constitutional status and representation in parliament because of Pakistan's commitment to a UN resolution is a lame excuse as the resolution does not forbid Pakistan from providing constitutional rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. After all, Azad Jammu & Kashmir operate under an interim constitution enacted by the AJK Legislative Assembly in 1974.

Only recently, President Zardari signed a memorandum of understanding with China for a 7000-MW power project in Gilgit-Baltistan. The border agreement between Pakistan and China is provisional and subject to revision upon

resolution of the Kashmir dispute. If the Pakistani government can enter agreements directly affecting Gilgit-Baltistan with a third party, there is hardly any justification for not entering into a (provisional) constitutional accord with the region's people.

There are two clear strands of thoughts regarding a possible way forward. The pro-Pakistan majority supports the area's inclusion in the federation of Pakistan as a province by adding Gilgit-Baltistan in Article 1 of the 1973 constitution

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as a territory of Pakistan which could be subject to revision upon a final resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Others inspired by Kashmiri nationalist leaders call for an independent united state or confederation of Kashmir.

Prime Minister Gilani failed to admit that there has been tremendous pressure from Kashmiri nationalist leaders whenever the government has taken a policy decision on Gilgit-Baltistan. The predicament goes back to the Kashmir dispute. The demand for a plebiscite on Kashmir may appear erroneous but it would be wrong to make the innocent population of Gilgit-Baltistan pay for someone else's blunder.

The people insist that their area, as large as the NWFP, is not a territory awarded to Pakistan by the Radcliffe Boundary Commission. According to them, neither were they freed from foreign tribes as in AJK's case. Gilgit-Baltistan, they argue, was liberated as a result of a spontaneous local revolt. Denizens opted to become



a part of Pakistan and hence they believe that by getting rid of Dogra occupation, which predates the Amritsar treaty through which the regime acquired Kashmir from the British, they severed whatever symbolic relationship existed between Gilgit-Baltistan and the former princely state of Jammu & Kashmir.

On the other hand, the Kashmiri leadership has had difficulty in understanding Pakistan's dilemma as, over the years, Gilgit-Baltistan's geo-strategic importance has risen to a level where the area cannot be 'donated'.

There was no Karakoram Highway in 1947 and the water and power crises in Pakistan have never been as acute as now. Policy circles realise that in a region beset with conflict and intense competition, Gilgit-Baltistan is crucial as a trade, water and oil corridor for South, West and Central Asia. With the Kalabagh dam off the table for

the moment and climate change looming large, upstream water projects have become crucial for the survival and development of the country.

Containing some of the world's largest freshwater resources on which the irrigated agriculture of Punjab and Sindh depends, the estimated hydroelectric potential of the eight rivers and countless streams in Gilgit-Baltistan goes beyond Pakistan's current needs. Ongoing mega-projects like the Bhasha-Diamir dam further necessitates that Gilgit-Baltistan's people are given a voice in national decision-making so that the region's public representatives can safeguard socioeconomic interests.

Renaming the Northern Areas as Gilgit-Baltistan is perhaps the most significant part of the deal as far as the locals are concerned as this change in nomenclature will help people regain their lost identity

and go a long way in resurrecting the tourism industry in an area otherwise devastated by the Taliban.

Moreover, the creation of the offices of an auditor-general, public service commission and chief election commissioner are steps that should have been taken years ago. But the increase in the list of subjects for the Gilgit-Baltistan assembly to legislate would mean little if the powers of the governor to discard edicts are not curtailed. Similarly, while the provision allowing the local assembly to debate the budget is a positive move, what is also needed is to build the administration's revenue-generation and financial-management capacity.

True, province-like status given to the region may have saved it from a situation similar to the one in restive Balochistan. However, if the reforms prove only cosmetic, the reaction of the people there could turn violent. If this happens, it would not only hurt the patriotic sentiments of nearly two million locals but also harm the country's interest in a strategic and resource-rich region currently surrounded by the Indian military, the Chinese army, NATO forces and the Taliban.

With thanks to DAWN Newspaper



DREAM IS POWER

INSPIRING SUCCESS STORIES

KANEEZ FAMITA



Women are typically deemed as the epitome of kindness, benevolence, purity and strength. The power she possesses is indispensable. Unfortunately, not everyone is aware of this.

In our society women struggle to achieve their goals in life and for centuries, this has been a grave concern within our country. Throughout history, our women have encountered numerous tumultuous obstacles in their attempts to live their dreams. Those who succeed with resolute self-confidence, motivation and determination are assets to our country. They live as inspirational role models to all.

By convention, the first step towards achieving something is to will it to happen. Just as in the previous issue, we now present you with the story of a new dreamer. One who not only continued to dream in the face of adversity but also went on to turn her dream into reality. Despite being raised in an environment where, for decades, it was deemed a sin for women to receive education, this young woman managed to receive an education independently and currently serves as a teacher for little girls in her village. She tries to impart to her students the fundamental values and virtues as well as the importance of education. She is- Kaneez Famita.

“Our women have encountered numerous tumultuous obstacles in their attempts to live their dreams. Those who succeed with resolute self-confidence, motivation and determination live as inspirational role models to all”

“No nation can rise to the height of glory unless
your women are side by side with you.”
Muhammad Ali Jinnah- March 10, 1944



Kaneez was born on September 21, 1990 in Koardu village to a family with six brothers and three sisters. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a teacher. A dream she realized with her extraordinary fortitude and resilience. She has since been teaching at Alzahra Girls School Koardu for 2 years- a vocation she fulfills while furthering her education.

Kaneez places education above love, clean water, electricity, food, and a peaceful environment and she gives much credit for all of her achievements to the Almighty, Allah, who has blessed the people with his creation of human beings.

She remembers being most disheartened after she graduated from the 8th grade and was left unable to continue with her education as there were no higher classes in her school. Being female, it was virtually impossible for her to be able to continue her studies out of her village. Thus, she considers the completion of her education independently and her passing of the Metric exam her greatest achievement.

She recollects and determines that the lowest point in her life was the time when she was but a child and there were no water pipes or taps available in her area. She was made to fetch water from nearby water

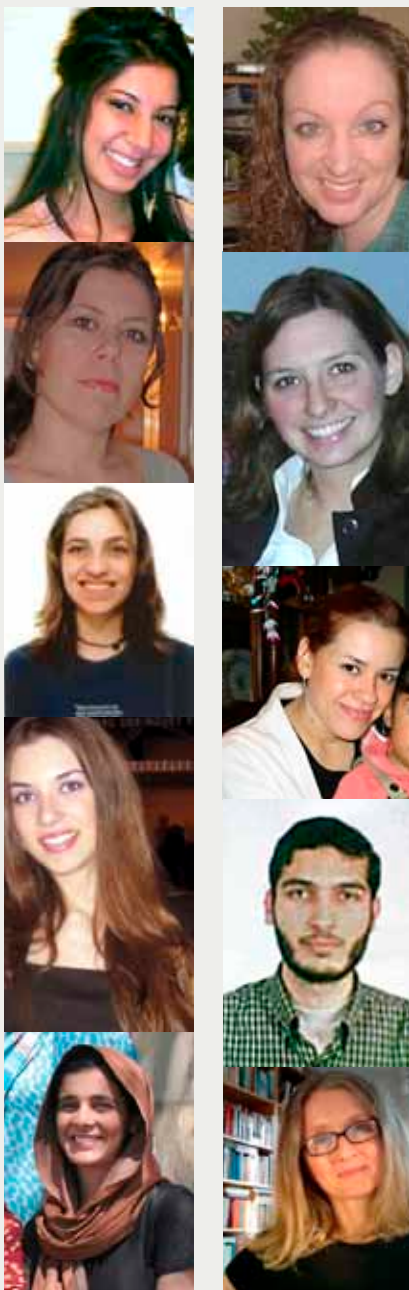
well dug about 14-16 feet deep every day. She vividly remembers that day she was asked to fetch for water by her grandmother. While filling the water pot, she slipped and fell right into the well. She struggled and waved her hands frantically in hopes of grabbing the attention of any passer-by. Fortunately, her brother spotted her and thus she was rescued on the nick of time.

God had saved her from the frightful incident.

Kaneez hopes to be able to dedicate her life to her work for as long as she can for the future of her people. She harbors hopes that one day; she will be able to contribute more towards the development of her community. The most prevalent problem her community faces is the shortage of water. This results in complications with irrigation, deforestation, a lack of educational facilities (especially for females), inadequate health facilities and high unemployment rate.

She encourages all young people in her society to value education and to strive for their country in order to lead a good life in future and after they rise to heaven. After all, the key to bringing peace to the world is for mankind to work together, staying true and serve their country with their utmost effort.

GRACE WON THE UNV VOLUNTEERING AWARD 2009



GRACE Association (Pakistan Team) has won the UNV Online Volunteering Award 2009!

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme announced the winners of the "Online Volunteering Award 2009", on International Volunteer Day (5 December 2009) in honor of the outstanding contributions of volunteers who work entirely over the internet, contributing to peace and development all over the world by aiding non-profit developmental organizations. The award is an initiative of the UNV Online Volunteering service.

In conjunction with the theme of International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2009 - 'Volunteering for our Planet'- the awards were given out in recognition of the efforts of online volunteers in supporting the adaptation, innovation and mitigation of various environmental issues around the globe.

A jury of experts in volunteerism and development cooperation selected the winners based on their commitment and contributions, the results of their collaboration and their impact on the activities of the various organizations they aided.

The jury included Mr. Nicolas Alipui, Director of Programmes

at UNICEF, Mr. Mauro Massoni, the Head of the Multilateral Office of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Taras Tymchuk, Programme Coordinator of the GURT Resource Center for NGO Development, Ukraine, as well as UNV representatives of multiple countries.

GRACE Association hereby congratulates all winners of the UNV Online Volunteering Award 2009- in particular, the GRACE Team of ten online volunteers who helped GRACE Association Pakistan improve the quality of life of marginalized and vulnerable communities in less developed parts of Northern Pakistan.

The team comprised of Aisha Aisha Mian, Jennifer Wells, Kallioimora Bzepam, Katie Simons, Laura Gamboa-Cavazos, Laura Riveni, Loai Farajallah, Paula Ellinger da Fonseca, Sehrish Rashid, and Yvonne Nelson.

GRACE Association Pakistan thereby thanks UNV for selecting GRACE Association-Pakistan's team as one of the winners of the UNV Online Volunteering Award 2009.

For more details, kindly visit: <http://www.onlinevolunteering> (Stories > Grace Pakistan)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS



Donor: The UN Voluntary Fund
Funds available: US \$5,000 - 50,000
Deadline: 31 March 2010

Funding Objective: *(taken from the Fund's guidelines)* "Priority in allocating grants is given to projects addressing the root causes of slavery [...] combined with income generating activities; projects should consider the victims' need for security, education, independence, and reintegration into society; projects should address the role that human suffering, discrimination, social hierarchy; poverty, gender inequalities and unemployment are playing in perpetuating contemporary forms of slavery. Organizations submitting applications are encouraged to integrate capacity building activities in their applications, which could include human rights and project management training."

Application forms can be downloaded from the OHCHR website. The deadline to submit them is 31 March 2010. A Board of Trustees in its annual session held in September 2010 will make the final decision on grantees. Grants are disbursed from October to December 2010 for activities proposed to be started in 2011.

Mailing address

UNVFVS - OHCHR
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Physical location

OHCHR - Motta
48 Giuseppe Motta
1202 Geneva
Tel.: (41-22) 928 9737 or 928 9314/Fax (41-22) 928 9010
Email: SlaveryFund@ohchr.org
Web: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Slavery/Pages/SlaveryFundMain.aspx>



Donor: USAID
Funds available: N/A
Deadline: 4 February 2010

Funding Objective: Both US-based and non-US organizations are invited to submit applications. However, all applicant organizations should have a wide presence of international Family Planning (FP) clinics and a track record of providing FP services.

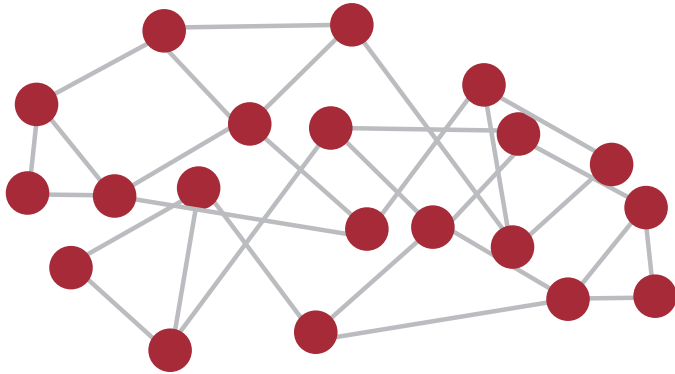
Other criteria includes "have documented experience in implementing FP programs in developing countries, with FP being a central part of the organization's mission; have the capacity to provide south to south training via networks of clinics in multiple countries and regions; have links with community based support systems and non government organizations, and have a strong and documented track record in training these organizations in family planning; and be able to expand USAID's reach by operating in countries in which USAID does not currently have programming, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia."

[...] USAID will conduct two rounds for accepting concept papers. The first round will end on 30 November 2009 and the second round will end of 4 February 2009. After reviewing the concept notes, USAID will seek detailed proposals from selected applicants. For more information, download the documents at this link. [...]

Contact information

<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=mLTjLHbRZBzQ9rQIKsr8PTq8h9tpVGqLfTJxv5482nj4LNv4VBmj!-1299818899?oppld=50154&mode=VIEW>

AN IDEA: COMMUNITY SCHOOL NETWORK BALTISTAN



Being remote and far flung from rest of the world in the mountainous series of Karakoram and Himalaya, the inhabitants of Baltistan were living like in ancient age. But with the access to media and increasing information on the importance and needs of education, the communities in remote villages are running schools by their own with no educational leadership and management expertise. Thus thousands of children are raising without proper and quality primary education. As a result the majority of the youth from village backgrounds have no chance to get higher education and seats in any educational institution in the country or a high position at jobs.

The Community School Network (CSN) Baltistan is a new idea in that region by Grace Association Pakistan to create the Conditions for Learning & Living for the students and families in the Community School District in Baltistan through strong and sustainable school and community partnerships. Currently there is no platform uniting the community schools of the area. GRACE Association Pakistan sees a great need for a common network organization of community schools as this would greatly improve the quality of education and the management of community schools in the area.

The Network will serve as a training and technical support center with emphasizes on development of community resources, as well as the integration of services and supports available to schools. The

Network seeks to engage the public by bringing stakeholders together in concrete, effective ways that benefit children, brokering and aligning services between community-based organizations and District schools, and promoting quality standards and accountability. Through professional development, education, awareness and other technical support, the Network will help to build capacity within and among schools and community organizations, as well as across systems in an effort to realize the vision of full-service community schools.

Grace Association Pakistan invites all interested community schools, individuals, educationists and public and private sectors to join in this movement and collaborate to promote:

- School readiness through early childhood development
- Quality education for all students
- Youth and character development
- Family supports and basic needs
- Meaningful community engagement and collaboration
- Safe schools and neighborhoods

Together we can help our children grow healthy and succeed in schools. We can empower ourselves by creating safe communities, where families are strong and self sufficient.

For more information please contact:

Mr. Muhammad Qasim, Coordinator
Grace Association Pakistan
Main Airport Road Astana
Skardu, Pakistan

Tel + 92 5815 455 067

Mob + 92 346 6550 778

Email grace.skardu@grace.org.pk

YOUR OBSERVATIONS

EVELIN NõMMISTE (Estonia), VOLUNTEER

A few months ago, lying on my bed in a hotel room in India, I was trying to decide if I should go home like planned or stay for longer. Reading the news about Pakistan made me think of the country again, as I had always wanted to go there. I had heard only positive reviews and often amazing stories about the country and its people. I searched Google for 'volunteer in Pakistan' and found GRACE Association Pakistan. I was positively surprised when I received a response to my inquiry email after only ten minutes. This is how I started communication with Mr. Khadim Hussain, Volunteers Manager at GRACE.

As I soon found out, GRACE is a small local NGO. I was very impressed with the amount of work they have done so far and the professionalism that portrayed by their website and communication. My goal was to get field experience and to work closely with the beneficiaries and local population, so working for a grassroots organization was very suitable for me.

I came to Pakistan in October 2009, which was probably one of the deadliest months in terms of terrorist attacks. The tense security situation in Islamabad was apparent due to numerous police check points but it

did not frighten me. I was excited! Also, Islamabad is a very calm, quiet, clean and modern city and it was very difficult to think of something bad happening in such a peaceful place.

The first two weeks I spent in GRACE's Islamabad office with Khadim and Mr. Shamshad. I was impressed by their focused, hard work in the office as well as at meetings, when networking, or coordinating activities. After two weeks, I traveled to Skardu with Khadim, where GRACE's Program Office is located. Astana village, located 4 km from Skardu, was going to become my home for the next one and a half months. The Skardu office was located nearest to GRACE Public School, so I was interacting with GRACE staff and teachers on a daily basis. They were all very welcoming and made me feel like home from the first day. My main host and supervisor was Mr. Muhammad Qasim, the Program Coordinator in the office. Mr. Qasim was very supportive and took good care of everything during my stay.

My new home in Astana was with a host family in the village. It was a very large family with relatives and extended family all over the village. I was living



‘My goal was to get field experience and to work closely with the beneficiaries and local population’

together with five of the ten sisters and two brothers of the family and their mother and father. The family welcomed me as their own daughter and I much enjoyed living with them.

Baltistan is a very peaceful region. All other regions in Pakistan have been issued travel warnings by many governments of the world. The people of Baltistan are extremely hospitable and kind. As it is one of the most remote areas in the world, there is still a sort of innocence and sincerity prevalent in the people that I have not seen anywhere else. It is really like a world of its own and living there made me forget about the familiar, different and more complicated world behind those mountains. Finding true happiness is the easiest thing in Baltistan, it is around you everywhere, in every second of the day. The simplicity of life was what I enjoyed most.

The things I enjoyed less were the lack of facilities and problems caused by that. As we had electricity only eight hours a day in the evenings, it was difficult to write and most work had to be done in the evenings. Lack of electricity meant also lack of warm water and difficulties in washing yourself. As I was there during the winter, temperature often dropped to degrees below zero and with small kerosene heaters being the only source of heat, the feeling of cold was always present.

Lack of basic infrastructure and facilities is the biggest



developmental issue in the region. The local schools close down for three months during the winter because it is too cold and heating the school buildings is not possible. Due to this fact, the children’s education suffers. Modern equipment in houses or schools is useless much of the time for the lack of reliable electricity supply. Many villages still lack access to clean water and women spend most of their time bringing water from distant sources. Providing basic facilities should be the main goal for any developmental efforts in the region.

Most of my work in Skardu involved administrative support to the Program Office. One of my work tasks was to assist in coordinating a water supply project in Astana that was funded by the Japanese government and was initiated by GRACE during my stay. The project was a good start for the development and empowerment of the community. GRACE is on the right track to accomplish its mission towards its vision by bringing positive change into the community.

I enjoyed my stay in Skardu, Baltistan very much. This is what I enjoyed most despite their eagerness to learn from me, the people of Skardu taught me even when they were not aware of they were doing it.

GET INVOLVED!



Make a donation

GRACE relies on the generosity of individuals and private foundations for helping bring the lifelong gift of literacy to children in our country. If you would like to support our efforts, make a contribution today.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to be a part of GRACE's work. We rely on the valuable support of volunteers who help us change the lives of communities living in poverty in Northern Pakistan.

Take action!



GRACE ASSOCIATION · PAKISTAN
THE GRASSROOTS' ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

THE VOICE OF GRASSROOTS 02/2009

Main Office Islamabad

27-E, 3rd Floor Office No. 5 Ali Plaza
Fazal Haq Road Blue Area
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel ++92.51.2529683
Tel ++92.51.2529683
+92. 51.2829970
Fax +92.51.2829971
Email info@grace.org.pk
Web www.grace.org.pk

Programme Office Skardu

Main Airport Road Astana
District Skardu
Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan
Tel +92.5815.455067
Fax +92.5815.455067
Email grace.skardu@grace.org.pk
Web www.grace.org.pk

Programme Office Peshawar

Warsak Road Yousafabad
(Darmangi Village)
Peshawar, NWFP Pakistan
Tel +92.91.5202571
Fax +92.91.5202571
Email info@grace.org.pk
Web www.grace.org.pk

GRACE TEAM
WISHES YOU
THE BEST FOR
2010