



CWS-P/A health worker provides consultation for an infant in Tora Bora, Afghanistan, photographed by CWS-P/A health worker

Editor's Message

Dear Readers:

Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan's January to April, 2010 newsletter is fully packed with information and covers our diverse activities ranging from community gardening in Sindh to girls' education in Laghman.

CWS-P/A addresses important social issues and is making a real difference for thousands of people in Pakistan and Afghanistan. From exploring alternative water sources in Pakistan to improving women's health in Afghanistan, the avenues of positive advancement and development are endless.

Underlying all activities is a sense of providing quality services and remaining accountable to the communities with whom we work. The strengthening of partnerships with other organizations is an integral part of our efforts. Read about one of these partnerships in Partner's Profile.

Throughout this edition, we share the innovative measures that lead to success in many projects. Discover how CWS-P/A experimented with one alternative energy source in Hot Topic.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Please send your feedback and suggestions to commoffice@cwspa.org.pk



CWS-P/A

Editor's Message	1
News from CWS-P/A	2-7
Partner's Profile	7
"Dedication Advances Afghan Women's Health"	8-9
"Water and Sanitation: Capacity Building and Alternative Water Sources"	10-11
Suggested Viewing	12
Hot Topic	12
Words of Wisdom	12
Mission Statement	12

Editorial Team: Kelli Siddiqui
Donna Fernandes
Shama Mall
Sidney Traynham

Behind the Scenes with Theater Groups

January-February

CWS-P/A supports the use of theater performances as an effective way to share social messages with communities. Through entertainment, key issues including gender rights, the environment, health, and education are presented to the community. CWS-P/A's Promoting Good Governance has trained six theater groups by providing skill and need-based training. These groups remain active and perform for their fellow community members. Capacity building is ongoing and geared toward the organizations' varying needs. In many cases, performers change due various reasons including career advancement and inability of students to perform full-time with the groups. Notably, an increase in female performers is occurring; in general, the women appear to possess higher confidence and exhibit more conceptual knowledge of the different issues than their male and female predecessors.

Even after the performers understand the issues, PGG continues to offer training in order to enhance the groups' knowledge and help increase the accuracy and effectiveness of their work. During January and February, PGG provided two workshops to two different organizations having theater groups. The first workshop, "Community Mobilization," aimed to discuss a common understanding of social mobilization as well as reinforce the importance of theater as an effective tool. The second workshop introduced the steps involved, principles, and tools of advocacy and lobbying. For a theater group, this equates to developing compelling advocacy messages and being able to deliver them effectively and clearly, covering the statement, evidence, and examples within the local context. Additionally, this workshop enables the organization to conceptualize and develop an advocacy plan in order to pursue their overall objectives in this regard. The workshop also introduced the benefits of networking and techniques for analyzing the audience for signs of support, neutrality, and opposition. These skills will increase the theater group's ability to bring about change in addition to spreading messages about important local, provincial, national, and global issues.

PGG team members also observed one of the theater group's performances. This form of monitoring enabled the team to provide constructive feedback to the performers. In addition, the PGG team was able to see firsthand how the local community willingly discussed the issues and possible solutions after the performance. If nothing else, the theater group was able to raise awareness and open the discussion for future action.



A shyly grinning girl enjoys her new educational tools, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

More than One Thousand Girls Newly Enrolled in School

January-April

In Afghanistan, the girls' education initiative continues to make measurable progress. Community awareness and mobilization resulted in 1,352 girls enrolling as new students in grades one to six since the project began. Motivation to attract girls to school is only one aspect of the project.

Providing quality education in an environment conducive for learning is essential for making headway in improving education prospects in Laghman Province. In order to promote valuable education, CWS-P/A with support from Presbyterian World Service & Development selected eleven schools to benefit from the project.

The schools were assessed for infrastructural damage. CWS-P/A successfully completed uplifting all eleven schools. The schools' administrations received First Aid kits and stationery. Anticipating the students needs, educational and otherwise, represents CWS-P/A's objective to enhance education in Afghanistan. Parent Teacher Committees were also established for each of the schools. The PTCs meet once a month and discuss topics that affect individual students such as issues at home preventing them from attending school or areas of weakness where students need to improve. Together the parents and teachers find solutions to quickly resolve these issues and keep the children's education a top priority.

Students also require the appropriate tools for learning. CWS-P/A observed that many students lacked basic stationery items

and textbooks. Based on needs assessments, the organization selected girls to receive essential educational material. Three thousand one hundred fifty girls received free textbooks and now have the opportunity to give as much attention to their studies as is required. Other students received stationery packages and storybooks. Approximately two thousand first and second graders received low-cost, indigenous materials including abaci and magnetic boards.

Outreach continues in order to develop a well-informed population which is keen to pursuing education for both their sons and daughters. Information, Education, and Communication materials were designed, printed, and distributed widely

throughout the target areas. Girls' education is now a topic of high priority at the community level. Elders to the very young appreciate the value of education; with a little assistance in improving the quality, the girls of Laghman will have a brighter, educational future than their counterparts in other parts of Afghanistan. The value extends beyond the educational system; students are highly motivated to pursue professions and serve their country after they complete their education. This is a beginning to a perpetual cycle of advancement for this and coming generations. One sixth grader's statement summarizes it all, "It will equip women with skills thus allowing them to provide essential services such as health and education to other women."

Community Gardens: Helping Families Attain Food Security

April

Umerkot, adjacent to Mirpurkhas, is a district in Sindh Province, Pakistan that suffers acute water shortage. For its inhabitants, food security slips further away as access to water dwindles with each passing day. Availability, accessibility, and affordability of basic commodities are at stake. According to a CWS-P/A study conducted with SSEWA-Pak in fourteen villages of Taluka Samaro Tehsil, 72% of the community is dependent on agriculture as an income source. Due to water shortage, only 30-40% of land is cultivatable. Since December 2008, CWS-P/A's food security initiative helped one hundred villages in Umerkot progress toward improved food security after success with a similar, ongoing project in Mirpurkhas.

The project encompasses several aspects. One of the successful components involves increased participation of women through community gardens. Originally, the initiative entailed the distribution of kitchen gardening kits that women planted individually at or near their homes. However, based on community feedback, the women are encouraged to plant collective gardens. In most cases, the women have planted the gardens on land not being used for other purposes.

Planned to coincide with the ideal planting season, CWS-P/A and its partner distributed community gardening kits between April 8 and 22, 2010. In total, 1100 women across forty-three villages received the kits containing six varieties of vegetable seeds including okra, pumpkin, bitter gourd, ridge gourd, squash, and cluster beans. SSEWA-Pak frequently visits the villages in order to observe the progress of the gardens.

This initiative not only increases the amount of food available to these families, it empowers the women. They are able to contribute to their families' nutritional needs and well-being as well as provide additional economic support in the case of surplus vegetables. The women are able to save money by decreasing their grocery expenses and also add nutritional variety to their daily meals. An overwhelming sense of ownership is expressed by the women when they discuss



A woman happily displays her gardening seeds, Qabil Halepoto Village, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

their gardens. Women become more involved with running the household; husbands and wives work together to foster a healthier home environment and increased household resources.

A gardening kit is not enough to dramatically reverse the food insecurity crisis; however, this simple intervention provides guidance and motivation to these women to work toward attaining food security. Awareness and training increase the success rates and sustainability. Combined with other activities including the construction of irrigation ponds, development of farming resource centers and seed banks, and self-help groups, the gardening kits are part of a more comprehensive food security initiative.



Man clearing road under CWS-P/A's cash for work initiative, photographed by Khursheed Ali

Meeting Food and Livelihood Needs of Conflict-Affected Households

February-April

The conflict which started in May 2009 displaced millions of people in Pakistan. As the situation began to calm, families started returning home. A large percentage of the population depends upon agriculture for income generation. Damage to property including agricultural lands, equipment, and homes occurred during the conflict. Farmers returned with little or no resources. Odds were against many farmers in terms of their next planting season and harvest.

CWS-P/A, in partnership with a local NGO, assessed and identified three union councils in Swat for its project, Immediate Food Security Assistance to Most Conflict-Affected Vulnerable Families in NWFP Pakistan, which received support from ECHO through ACT Alliance partner, Dan Church Aid. The project aims to provide the most food insecure households with a means of meeting their food and livelihood needs. In order to best serve the targeted population, male and female village organizations were established to encourage community participation. With a list of potential beneficiaries for the project, the VOs were assigned the task of selecting the most appropriate households from the list to benefit from the project.

The project consists of two main components. Cash grant and voucher scheme was designed to provide assistance to households with two acres or less of land, damaged agricultural land, and inability to afford labor to clear damaged land before the next planting season. The VOs selected which beneficiaries were in most need of this assistance. Timely distribution of vouchers enabled the beneficiaries to purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and tools before the planting season.

The VOs also received the task of identifying projects for the second component, cash for work. Among the projects, the most common involve rehabilitation of water channels in order to supply water for field irrigation. Another valuable input from the VOs is to repair or construct roads connecting the fields to the markets, a way to ensure farmers can easily supply the markets and increase their income. In addition to the economic returns, the cash for work scheme helps the returnees emotionally adjust by providing activity, income source, and improving the surrounding area.

Community mobilization and participation are essential for the project's success. However, a greater achievement is the involvement of female community members. In this particular region of Pakistan, women typically do not engage in activities outside the home, participate in decision-making, or have access and control over financial resources. Female VOs were established separately to respect the social norms. Like their male counterparts, the women identified the recipients of voucher and cash for work initiatives. Sixty percent of the beneficiaries for the cash for work component are women; these women are involved in Swati embroidery under this activity.

By assisting these families, the area will have a better harvest which is the foundation for future planting and harvesting seasons. Without this support, many families would have been unable to clear their lands, purchase agricultural inputs, and plant this season. They would not have had enough income or resources to finance their needs including food, health, and education. In some cases, the vicious cycle of debt would have become their only option. Now, the future is a little less insecure in terms of food security and livelihood.



Children actively engaging in classroom activities at CRC, photographed by Sidney Traynham

Making a Real Difference for Children in Bamyan *January-April*

When CWS-P/A introduced its current Child Rehabilitation Center initiative in Bamyan, it was the only opportunity for the poorest and most vulnerable children to receive education in the target area. Since the center started serving the community, significant improvements were observed with regard to education, awareness, and nutrition levels.

CRC offers various activities that teach children life skills, encourage creativity, and provide recreation. However, the basics of education are also available. For two to three hours every day, the students learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. Through assessment, the students' education levels have increased remarkably since the time they joined. Another factor is that children have support from their home, an added motivation toward success. CRC regularly, almost once a week, hosts parent teacher meetings to discuss issues related to children's life and education. Involving parents helps create an environment that is conducive and supportive for learning, in and out of the classroom.

Awareness is essential for change to occur. Students learn about taking care of themselves, particularly with regard to health and hygiene. However, CRC staff also involved parents and community members in health and hygiene sessions. Prior to the project, good hygiene practices were less regularly followed. However, observations show that students and the general community have started following better hygiene practices such as washing hands at appropriate times. Attention to hygiene will decrease the number of illnesses such as diarrhea and other infections often associated with unhygienic living conditions or poor hygiene practices.

Another essential part of CRC is the provision of daily, healthy meals. In most cases, the children were unaccustomed to having full, balanced meals; most families who benefit from CRC struggle to even properly feed their children let alone meet other needs children have. By providing the students with one meal a day, considerable improvement in their nutritional status has occurred. There is no evidence that their nutritional needs are being fully met, but there is definite improvement.

Promoting Peace through Teachers *February*

For the past 3 years, CWS-P/A provides teachers from interior Sindh with a peace manual; two years ago a student workbook was also introduced. The manual and workbook, produced by CWS-P/A, are intended as a resource for incorporating peace education into school curriculum. The workbooks contain content in two languages, Urdu and Sindhi, which makes it more user-friendly for the students. In order to equip the teachers with knowledge of the resource material, orientation workshops are conducted.

The most recent workshop was conducted from February 17-19, 2010. CWS-P/A relies on expert staff to facilitate these workshops. This was the third workshop facilitated by Syed Moazzam Ali. His experience with the peace education program gives him firsthand experience with how it benefits the communities. Asked about the benefits of the manual and workbook, he shares, "It is important that peace and learning to live with one another should be made part of school curriculum. The workbooks have many activities that promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence and help in shaping mindsets."

Many factors affect how peace is attained, maintained, or dissolved; therefore, the Peace Education for Primary Schools team comprehensively approaches the topic. Orientation sessions address related social issues that affect many places in Pakistan. Specifically, topics of gender, human rights, conflict and power, and quality education are crucial to building and maintaining peace in Pakistan. Before orientation sessions, CWS-P/A staff are sometimes met with opposition to incorporating peace education into the curriculum; teachers complain about overburden of other courses' workload. However, feedback after the sessions indicates change as teachers appreciate the importance of peace education.

One teacher expresses her thoughts, "We were teaching them peace education with the help of teacher's manual and now the children have this workbook with them and take great interest in this subject. I teach one lesson per week. They love to draw pictures in the workbook. They ask questions and learn in a friendly atmosphere. This workbook has made things easy for the teachers as well. It gives teachers more time to reflect. My students like this subject very much and tell me that now they try to resolve conflicts in their homes with the help of peace building tools and will try to become peaceful citizens. Some parents visited us to tell us how much their children appreciate peace education."

Teachers play an important role in the way youth's minds develop attitudes and perceive social issues. By targeting teachers, CWS-P/A is able to indirectly provide peace education to thousands of children, the population from which the next generation of leaders for their local communities as well as the country will emerge.



Boys take interest in the construction of latrines as CWS-P/A and partner staff inspect the quality of the cement mixture, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

WASH Emergency Assistance for More Than 15,000 Individuals *March*

Between December 2009 and March 2010, CWS-P/A implemented an emergency WASH project in Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North West Frontier Province), Pakistan for IDPs and the host community. This initiative benefited 2,386 families which was 1,286 more families than originally targeted.

Activities took place in three union councils, Kotla Saidan, Mahrra, and Naivella, and included construction of latrines, bathing places, and washing points for communal use. As was the case throughout the crisis in Pakistan that displaced millions of people, female IDPs in D. I. Khan faced extreme challenges with respect to sanitation. Assessment of the target area showed that in Mahrra and Naivella up to fifty people lived in one house without proper places for defecation. After the installation of latrines, both at household and communal levels, this issue was resolved, particularly for women who previously had to wait until nighttime to go outside for defecation. Zafar Wazir, Project Officer, spent a significant amount of time in the project area during implementation. When asked in what way the project made the most difference, he stated, "The latrines really helped the women; they were so happy. In one case, there was a house with about forty people living in it and only one latrine. There was even a case of one widow with two young daughters. She had no son, and they were living alone. Even under these circumstances, she used to wait till evening to go outside; she expressed such gratitude when we constructed a latrine." He continued, "In some cases, it was impossible to construct communal latrines because the women's issues would remain unresolved. We had to make some latrines at household level in order to serve the most vulnerable women."

In these rural areas of Pakistan, sanitation is also an issue in schools. Most schools lack a sufficient number of latrines for the number of faculty and students. During a survey, Government Primary Schools, Naivella was one school that had only one latrine for 258 students (67 of whom were IDPs) and seven teachers. After CWS-P/A's intervention, the school now has an additional two latrines which according to teachers has helped bring about better discipline since students are using the latrines instead of going outside. The teachers also say that there is a decrease in the number of illnesses and improved attendance; they attribute this to the use of latrines which is more sanitary and has helped decreased sicknesses caused by previously poor sanitation and hygiene practices.

In addition to constructing hundreds of latrines, CWS-P/A improved access to water and sanitation in other ways. Mostly in communal areas, easily accessible to women, bathing places and washing points were constructed to provide a way for the IDPs to maintain at least a minimal standard of hygiene. Hand pumps were also installed in communal areas to provide access to water for meeting domestic needs including drinking water. Jerry cans were distributed to aid in water collection. Placement of solid waste bins also promoted the use of proper disposal of waste, yet another way to improve sanitation and living conditions.

As a soft component of the project, health and hygiene sessions were conducted with men, women, and children. This aspect increased the use of and attention given to good hygiene practices. This was another component of the project that reached more individuals than originally targeted; in this case, more than double the intended number of people participated in the sessions. In order to assist individuals achieve good hygiene practices, CWS-P/A provided hygiene kits containing basic items such as soap, bathing towel, sanitary pads, and women's underwear. For many, this was the first time they received these basic items since they had reached D. I. Khan.

HIV Work in Pakistan: Creating Awareness one Step at a Time *March-April*



According to the World Health Organization, between 2003 and 2008, access to antiretroviral drugs in low and middle income countries rose tenfold. This evidence suggests that access to antiretroviral drugs helps reduce HIV/AIDS related mortality. CWS-P/A continues to promote awareness while simultaneously helping people gain access to testing and treatment.

Between March and April 2010, a total of six community workshops were held in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. In addition, three adolescent sessions along with a poster competition took place with 246 participants. No doubt exists that open discussion with youth, religious leaders, and communities on sexual health and HIV has been a challenging task for CWS-P/A's HIV project staff. However, an increase in participation rates has been observed at community awareness sessions and reflects how ongoing efforts bring about positive change in societies where discussing sexual health publicly is taboo. "At the same time, you can be sure that some amount

of controversy is going to spark," says HIV Coordinator, Beenish Hashwani. She shares a recent experience from a workshop conducted at Shadman Town in Karachi. "At the end of the workshop, one woman took me to a corner of the hall and said, "You keep suggesting the use of condoms and you must stop. These days many men are being unfaithful to their wives so the use of condoms will only further aggravate the situation thereby giving men the freedom to do as they please."

HIV awareness sessions not only aim at helping communities understand the facts about HIV but to further share the knowledge to reduce prevalence. It would be simply unrealistic to expect people to completely change their mindsets after attending a one-day session. "However, we need to talk about the issue and break myths associated with condom usage which is why facilitators including myself use a neutral approach by presenting options rather than suggesting anything," says Hashwani.

Partner's Profile



Sujag Sansar Orgnaization was established in 2005; its name literally means "Awakening the World." SSO works in Dadu District, Sindh Province, Pakistan and focuses on social harmony, infrastructure development, education, health, human rights, environment, and media advocacy. The organization envisions a world of equity, peace, justice, and prosperity attained through joint efforts.

CWS-P/A provides technical support to SSO with regard to good governance, advocacy, and theater. SSO's theater group raises awareness within the community on human rights, the scarcity of drinking water, and early marriages. After receiving training over the past year, the theater group developed new stories related to polluting fresh water, water shortage, drought, and deforestation.

Discussing partnership, SSO's president, Mashooque Birhamani, shares, "During the capacity building and performance process of CWS-P/A, we learned how to do effective and successful advocacy and work in neglected areas and on neglected issues. We also gained much capacity besides from training through technical support. In short, we have learned how to implement the philosophy and realize the vision of SSO by using effective tool of theater and other means."



Dedication Advances Afghan Women's Health

■ *By Kelli Siddiqui*

For three decades, Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan has worked for Afghan refugees' health in Pakistan, and since 1997 for returnees in Afghanistan.

In this time, the health teams comprising of doctors, community health workers, and volunteers helped decrease controllable disease cases such as tuberculosis and improved mother and child health while also bringing primary and secondary health services into the communities. Over the decades, various external factors hindered health initiatives. Poor, unhygienic camp living conditions, inadequate access to safe drinking water, and conflict and insecure working environment are a few examples.

However, more significant to making progress was the intangible aspect of encouraging the Afghan communities to regularly seek medical attention for women. Initially, few women accessed health services, and this was mostly possible when health workers made home visits. Dedicated staff and volunteers not only provided basic treatment, vaccinations, and medications, they also raised awareness on important health related issues such as mother and child care, following immunization schedules, tetanus vaccinations for women of childbearing age, and good

hygiene practices. Gradually, the community began to see improvement in health and a decrease in infant and mother mortality rates when advice from the medical teams was followed. This simple action is life-saving; however, it was not an easy feat to accomplish.

Much of the success is attributed to community health workers who provide individualized health services to the Afghan families and discuss the importance of proper healthcare for men, women, and children. Perseverance to work through poor weather conditions, conflict, natural disasters, and opposition is a leading example of how much the health workers believe in the services they provide. The health program received an increase in community volunteers. Health statistics also improved dramatically. For years, expected results during vaccination campaigns were 100% achieved and in some cases exceeded. The TB DOTS program saved hundreds of lives; many patients had not known they were suffering with TB until it was identified by health workers.

CWS-P/A's experience grew as a result of providing long-term healthcare to the Afghan community in Mansehra, Pakistan. Therefore, when many Afghan refugees began returning to Afghanistan, CWS-P/A took what seemed like a natural step by replicating the health program in Nangarhar Province and later in Laghman Province. Even some of the health workers who

worked in Pakistan joined CWS-P/A's health program in Afghanistan. Many returnees came from places other than Mansehra so new efforts were needed to raise awareness.

A similar approach was used in Afghanistan, and before long, the project developed into a comprehensive solution to health needs in the targeted areas. Currently, NLHP operates sixteen health facilities and community-based healthcare from health posts in seven districts. Services range from basic preventative and curative health to mental health services. Education and awareness are an integral part of the project and even include topics such as HIV & AIDS. The entire community benefits from the health project; however, CWS-P/A emphasizes services for women and children and in this area has the most significant successes.

Having modern medical equipment and well-trained doctors is not enough to get female patients to the health facilities for treatment. For centuries, women have delivered babies at home, often with the help of older women in the family or midwives. A majority of families in Afghanistan still follow this practice. Afghanistan also has one of the poorest infant mortality rates in the world. CWS-P/A communicates the message that while delivering babies at home is not wrong, the advantages of having trained medical staff, hygienic labor room, monitoring equipment, and proper medications help save lives. More mothers and children survive when babies are delivered under these circumstances.

In an interview with CWS-P/A's Raghav Sharma, Dr. Zarguna Barakzai claims, "the project's biggest success has been a steady increase in people's awareness regarding the significance of women's and children's health attested to by an increasing proportion of women accessing medical facilities at the time of delivery." CWS-P/A measures an increase in both antenatal and postnatal care. Between January and March, 2010, the health project achieved 111% of its target for antenatal care and 70% for postnatal care. This is partly due to the launching of mother and child care services in three facilities in Surkhrood District. However, the most significant aspect that brought about this positive change is the recruitment of midwives and additional female staff. Dr. Barakzai attributes this success to CWS-P/A's unique initiative to provide midwife, vaccination, delivery, and laboratory services at the same location.

Dr. Barakzai believes the health project significantly contributes to Nangarhar having the lowest infant mortality rate of all the provinces in Afghanistan. Also in an interview with Sharma, Kamila Barakzat, CWS-P/A Mother and Child Health Coordinator, cites a decline in seven targeted districts in Nangarhar and Laghman; between October and December 2009, only one natal death was registered.

Other women's health topics still require more effort. Reproductive health services have been irregularly offered due to the difficulty in finding and keeping the highly qualified doctors required to do the complicated procedures. Insecurity in the region is a major factor, but CWS-P/A makes all attempts to provide such services or identify cases for referral to the provincial hospital. TT shots for women of childbearing age are valuable and can be the difference between life and death, but many women still do not seek this service due to a lack of awareness. The topic will be emphasized more prominently during upcoming community health days. As with other issues, CWS-P/A relies upon the relationship the health workers develop with community members in order to inspire change. All female health staff members are now engaged in community health days as a way to raise more awareness on the multitude of health topics and reach more individuals.

A myriad of factors affect the way people move toward change. An attempt to influence women's health on a broad, impersonal scale would be ineffective in Afghanistan. CWS-P/A recognizes the importance of catering its services to the individual. In Afghanistan, this means not only for the female patients but also their husbands and extended family. Quality of treatment and delivery of services is the essence of healthcare throughout the world; the difference in Afghanistan is that without such attention to awareness of women's issues, efforts would be inconsequential.

Now that the community is aware of CWS-P/A's initiative and services, word of mouth within the community helps more women gain access. Dr. Barakzai believes the project staff, through honesty and dedication, developed lasting bonds of trust with the local communities. Interested in the discussion, Maujabi, a fifty-five year old female patient, contributes, "The health facility set up by CWS-P/A helped me gain timely and economical access to medical facilities for which I had to earlier travel to the city. Moreover, the free basic medication and good relations which the clinic's doctors have established with patients like myself have given me confidence to not only seek treatment for my own ailments but now I also encourage my young daughter-in-laws to come and seek medical help."

Women's health expands into areas that have presented challenges to the health staff. Family planning is a difficult topic to discuss with men and women. In Afghanistan, the term 'child spacing' is used; the idea presented to women is that for their own health and for the health of their children, adequate time should be given between pregnancies. Kamila states that the most resistance comes from women. Many women think that it is against their religious beliefs while others quote their mother-in-laws as opposing it. Kamila shares one case. A thirty-five year old woman with a two year old and six month old infant came to the Amarkhel health facility. Although initially resisting the idea of child spacing, the woman has since been seen sharing the benefits of the program with other women at the facility. Kamila also expresses concern over secrecy around family planning. She explains that CWS-P/A promotes openness between couples and finds that through discussion and explanation family planning can be welcomed by husbands as well. This is also an important factor in maintaining a good relationship with the community; secrecy could lead to friction. Despite the sensitivity of family planning, CWS-P/A experienced an increase in child spacing consultations in the latest reporting period.

Counseling services help promote better practices in terms of women's health. The trained, health staff actively reaches out to women with vulnerable cases such as recent miscarriages. Speaking from her experience, Dr. Barakzai explains the difficulty in addressing women's health needs. "I faced resistance along similar lines to ideas of child spacing and access of health facilities by women." Cultural constraints and high illiteracy foster a neglect of women's health. However, she notes that dramatic changes are occurring within the targeted communities. "A larger number of women are asking for contraceptives and condoms, which was unimaginable until a few years ago." She believes that the awareness and education imparted by the health staff combined with the proliferation of print and visual media significantly broadens the community's knowledge about the more sensitive issues.

The success of NLHP in terms of women's health directly relates to the efforts of the female staff. The increasing trend of trained, female staff correlates with more women receiving education and treatment specifically catered to their individual needs. Through meeting women's health needs, CWS-P/A addresses the broader topic of women's rights. Continued success of NLHP is a success for the women of Afghanistan, those working for women's health and those seeking services.

Water and Sanitation: Capacity Building and Alternative Water Sources

■ By Donna Fernandes



Ruqia Begum demonstrates use of the rainwater harvesting system, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

Around **1.1 billion people** on the planet live in areas with **acute water shortages** and as a consequence lack proper sanitation. Statistics from **UNICEF WASH programs** show that the number of people who **lack basic sanitation** amounts to **2.6 billion** around the world.

Church World Service – Pakistan/Afghanistan recognizes the importance of the provision of safe water and hygiene awareness and has helped hundreds of Pakistani villages affected by the 2005 South Asian earthquake.

Various project interventions were covered in the districts of Poonch and Sudhnoti in Rawalakot. The districts form part of Azad Jammu and Kashmir located in the north-east of Pakistan with an estimated population of 3.8 million.¹ Moreover, a majority of the rural population depends on forestry, livestock, and agriculture for subsistence. Therefore, improving water supply systems and sanitation forms an essential aspect in reducing poverty within communities.

CWS – P/A through the Water Quality Improvement and Promotion of Hygiene (WAQIPH) Project conducted a KAP Survey (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) to understand hygiene situations in communities and develop sustainable community-based interventions. The project also focused on building community capacity by providing training on sustaining a water supply system. Three member management committees were formed in each village which assisted in promoting hygiene, operations and maintenance, and rainwater harvesting. Over several months, although incredibly challenging but worth every effort, the project assisted 204 villages. Imran Munir, Project Coordinator, shares, “In 95% of cases the quality and provision of water in the two districts were good. Given this, it can be said that this project was a follow-up project of the water supply systems that had already been installed with financial assistance of UNICEF. There had been no reported outbreak of diarrhea and other diseases caused by the intake of unclean water. However,

we needed to highlight the hazards of contaminated water and especially the effects it has on children.”

Between June 2009 and February 2010, hygiene sessions were organized in each village which included the participation of more than three thousand community members. In addition, trainings were held with school teachers, religious leaders, community activists, and health workers. Overall, the trainers addressed the prevention of a range of diseases at the household level. Ms. Shaheen Akhtar, a health professional with fourteen years of experience, participated. She says, “These trainings are crucial in reducing water-related diseases, and I mainly place a great amount of emphasis on mother and child health as part of my services. Consequently, I realized that these trainings help to lower maternal and infant mortality.” The training sessions through their capacity building purpose contributed to community members adopting preventable measures. Unity toward health and hygiene within the community developed.

In Poonch, the earthquake affected two hundred forty-two WATSAN schemes whereas in Sudhnoti, eleven WATSAN schemes were damaged. ERRAs WATSAN program included the reconstruction of infrastructure components for waste management, reconstruction of office and facility buildings, awareness campaigns, and water quality examining. These water supply systems resulted in the availability of clean water for community residents. Water scarcity still presented challenges for the community. As a result, CWS-P/A's initiative also involved installing rainwater harvesting systems as an alternative water source. Rainwater harvesting involves filling water storage tanks through pipes that carry rainwater from collection points on



Female community members discuss water treatment methods, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

household and building rooftops. Rainwater is diverted through a mesh filter in order to prevent dust, dirt, leaves, and insects from entering the water tank. The rainwater harvesting system is encouraged for domestic, hygiene purposes including sanitation except for direct use for human consumption.



Installation of rainwater harvesting system pipes, photographed by CWS-P/A staff

From Rango-gala Village in Rawalakot, Ruqia Begum, a widow has been able to cope with water scarcity via the CWS-P/A and UNICEF-ERRA supported rainwater harvesting system. She shares, "Daily I had to bring water from about three kilometers which affected my spine. Despite this long travel every day, the water was not enough to fulfill the requirement of both my family and livestock." When CWS-P/A's team explored the installation of the rainwater harvesting system in Ruqia Begum's village, enthusiastic community participation was noted. However, this was not always the case as Munir says, "One of the significant challenges had

been organizing communities and above all, gaining their trust. There had been times when we had been faced with not being able to carry out our assistance activities as community members expressed much frustration caused due to unsuccessful water supply systems previously installed by other agencies. With the help from social activists, we were able to begin our efforts in conducting surveys and establishing water management committees. Simultaneously, we worked to coordinate project activities with relevant line departments in order to identify roles of different stakeholders in the operational areas."

The rainwater harvesting system is encouraged for domestic, hygiene purposes including sanitation except for direct use for human consumption.

In addition, hundreds of community members including Ruqia Begum and her family experienced improved hygiene standards. She adds, "Since the installation of the rainwater harvesting system, I have sufficient water for all my needs. With rainwater, the storage tank fills up, and by connecting extension pipes, we share the overflow water with an adjacent mosque. More importantly, we now use household flush latrines, which are environmentally beneficial."

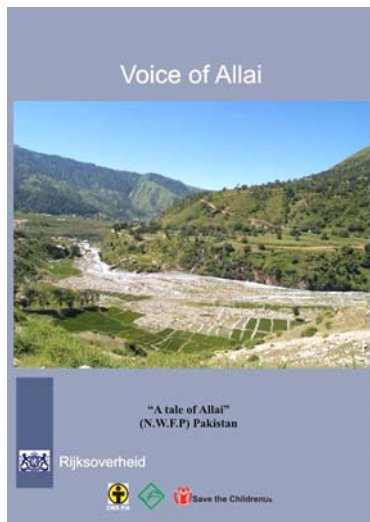
No doubt exists that community involvement is vital for long-term sustainability of improved water and sanitation in earthquake affected regions. Munir says, "It also remains essential to understand the relationship between nature and development to bring about necessary reforms in water management, investment, and governance. All of this requires commitment and CWS -P/A's programs have made positive impact in these regions."

¹ Planning and Development Department of Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Suggested Viewing

Voice of Allai

Voice of Allai is a documentary about the work CWS-P/A and Partnership for the Recovery and Development of Allai consortium partners conduct in Allai Valley which was devastated during the October 2005 earthquake. The four year project is a comprehensive approach to helping the communities rebuild their lives in one of the most remote areas of Pakistan.



Voice of Allai is available through CWS-P/A.

HOT Topic

What is Biogas?

Biogas typically refers to a gas produced by the biological breakdown of organic matter in the absence of oxygen. It originates from biogenic materials like animal manure, human waste, and crops and plants residues. When processed in a plant, biogas becomes an economical source of energy. In addition to the biogenic materials, the only other required input is wastewater. This is particularly useful in rural, farming areas because of the simplicity of implementation and use of cheap, raw materials.

A biogas plant consists of one input tank, a digester for producing gas, and an outlet for fermented, decomposed manure. The biogas can be used for household cooking purposes or for generating electricity for a gas generator. Size of biogas plants depends upon the number of animals reared by a farm or family. The combustion of gas emits very little odor or smoke and can be contained for use in a couple of ways. A pipe connection can be made from the digester to a kitchen stove through control valves if its intended use is for household cooking. If a compressor is installed, then gas cylinders can be filled and taken away from the plant for other uses. The manure is a good source of plant nutrients and can be used as fertilizer; the produced manure is well-decomposed and free from weed seeds and harmful fungus.

CWS-P/A, under its Expanded Dairy Development Program, constructed a biogas plant at its model dairy farm in Balakot, Pakistan. This experiment gauged whether a biogas plant would function properly in the region which faces cold winters and is located at a high altitude. Designed to meet the cooking requirements of a family of eight with three large animals, a six square foot digester was used to produce gas for cooking purposes of the seven workers at the farm. Using fifteen to twenty kilograms of farm yard manure as daily input, the biogas plant experiment was successful.

CWS-P/A's Mission Statement

CWS-P/A as an ecumenical organization will struggle for a community based on social justice, regardless of class, religion, gender, and culture by assisting marginalized communities to achieve economic prosperity and improve human and social capital through participatory endeavor, which liberates people and enhances their capacities to take control of their lives.

Words
Wof
Wisdom

"It is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it."

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)