

# EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

## Project Kashmir

### People's Science Institute, Dehradun

Over an year ago, we again witnessed the nature's fury in the killer earthquake in Kashmir. While a lot of aid went for immediate rescue and relief efforts, **IFA chose to focus on long term assistance.** People's Science Institute has a long history of highly effective disaster relief work. They specialize in medium and long term shelters and while they help build some homes for the impoverished, their main role is in training local masons to build low cost, earthquake resistant houses. IFA immediately provided them with \$10,000 for such assistance. The following report is a glimpse of the positive contribution that our support has made in the lives of these poorest people of a region that has already been devastated by insurgency and political unrest.

#### A. Masons Training Workshops



##### Gharkote workshop:

The first masons Training workshop was held at Gharkote village from **Aug 2-5, 2006**. For this training the site of Ms Zareefa Begum's (widow of Abdul Rashid Shah) house was selected. The training was attended by 10 masons out of whom five were good and were engaged in masonry work in the village. Two of them, Nazeer Ahmad and Ghulam Nabi, were outstanding. These two had also trained a lot of masons in the area and were the resource persons during three month ITI training at Lagama, Uri. The senior masons felt that the training would be useful but said that the experienced masons would come for training only when they were paid Rs 300/- per day as daily wages in lieu of loss of work.

##### Selection of masons:

--Only those masons who are recognized by the villagers were asked to attend the workshop. They were paid an honorarium of Rs 300/- per day for three days training.

--Whenever possible, the cheaper program of 4 days training with a daily honorarium of Rs 150/- was used.

##### Dani workshop:



*Masons training at Dani Sayeeda village (Uri)*

The second workshop was held at Dani Sayeeda village across the Jhelum near Ghingal in Uri Block from Aug 7-10, 2006. The venue was decided at the request of village elder Mr. Haji Abdur Rashid Juo, who commands a lot of respect in the village. He asked all the masons of the village to attend the workshop and said that those not attending would not be given work by the villagers. On the first day, 11 masons came. All of them were experienced and recognized by the villagers. Realizing the importance, usefulness and approach of training, three more masons joined the next day and continued till the last day. As the news of the training spread to nearby villages, the Sarpanch of the nearby Chullan-Kalsian village visited the training site and requested PSI to visit his village and train their masons too. On the last day a request also came from the nearby Dara village.

Realizing the importance and need for masons' training in the region, we decided to organize two training workshops in Chullan-Kalsian between August 29 and September 5. During that period possibilities of another workshop in Dara village was also to be explored since Dara is recognized as the masons' village.



*Learning the use of steel rods in place of through stones*

### **Need and scope of masons training:**

With villagers realizing the importance of masons' training there is a growing demand for such training. Apart from Chullan and Dara villages, requests have also been received from Powadian village, adjacent to Uri. In the next visit four additional workshops (possibly six) were planned.

### **B. Construction of Individual Houses**

COVA, a Hyderabad based network organization, did a survey of the poorest people in about 100 villages in Uri *tehsil*. PSI decided to concentrate in about 10 villages in Hazi Pir sector upstream from Uri. A list was obtained from COVA and the construction of a few houses was planned to start by the end of August 06, assuming that the funds for construction arrive at PSI. Their hope was to construct 30-35 houses (maximum 50) by the middle of December 2006 before the region begins to experience heavy snowfall.

### **C. Status of house construction**

\*About 15-20 % of the affected houses are being reconstructed. People seem to have gathered their own resources.

\*About 35-40% have made the plinth of their houses, but are waiting for the next installment from the government.

\*The remaining 50% are preparing to spend another winter in their temporary shelters. Even the state is not clear as to when they will release the next installment. They have spent all the money in the disbursement of the first installment and for administrative expenses. They are now waiting for the Central Govt. to release funds for the second installment.

### **Proposed action plan of PSI**

With the growing demand for masons training in the region PSI plans to remain focused on such workshops. This way the villagers will be able to use the next relief installment to construct their own houses. They will be asked to identify the sites of the poorest individuals and the masons training will be organized on these sites. It is proposed to complete these houses after the training with a maximum support from PSI of Rs 40,000/-.

*Disaster relief is not the focus of IFA since we feel that there are numerous charitable organizations, governments and other agencies that come forward during such times to provide relief and rescue. We feel our energies are better utilized in supporting long term structural changes. However, as a humanitarian organization, we feel compelled to respond to such tragedies. This is typically done through emergency release of funds as well as by having specific fund raising. Even under these circumstances we try to direct our support towards rehabilitation. In recent years, such support was also provided to the victims of the Asian Tsunami tragedy and of the hurricane Katrina.*