

RISING from the Rubble

Communities Lead
the Earthquake Response



Save the Children
Sweden

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Ghulam Qadri



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Sweden

Save the Children fights for children's rights.
We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- A world that respects and values each child,
- A world which listens to children and learns,
- A world where all children have hope and opportunity.

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Introduction

A powerful earthquake (7.6 on the Richter Scale) struck South Asia on 8 October 2005, causing widespread damage in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Northern districts of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) were worst hit. Entire towns and villages turned into rubble, killing over 70,000 men, women and children. Approximately the same number was injured and more than three million rendered homeless.

As in most disasters, children were severely affected. When the earthquake struck at 8.52 a.m., schools were in morning session. More than 17,000 children died when their school buildings collapsed. Many died in their homes. Those who survived were under psychological stress; they had lost friends and family members, including primary caregivers. In some cases, caregivers abandoned children to seek assistance in big towns.



The earthquake has been the most devastating natural disaster in the history of Pakistan. The force of the initial quake, the precipitous terrain, unstable slopes and the onset of winter overwhelmed the country's capacity to cope. Despite this, enormous effort was made by the people and Government of Pakistan to coordinate an effective humanitarian response. International community stood in support. Save the Children Alliance was part of the international response. Three Save the Children Alliance members – Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK and Save the Children US – have a strong organisational base in Pakistan since 1980, through which the Alliance launched largest earthquake relief, reconstruction and protection programme covering entire belt of severely hit areas in NWFP and AJK.

This report gives a glimpse of progress the project has made over the last year with support from communities. To sum it up a significant progress has been made in terms of meeting emergency shelter, food, health, education and child protection needs of children and their families. Yet a lot needs to be done. The affected population need continued support from the Government and international community to rebuild their lives; “rebuild it better”.







Children's participation in all project activities was core of implementation strategy.

Strategy

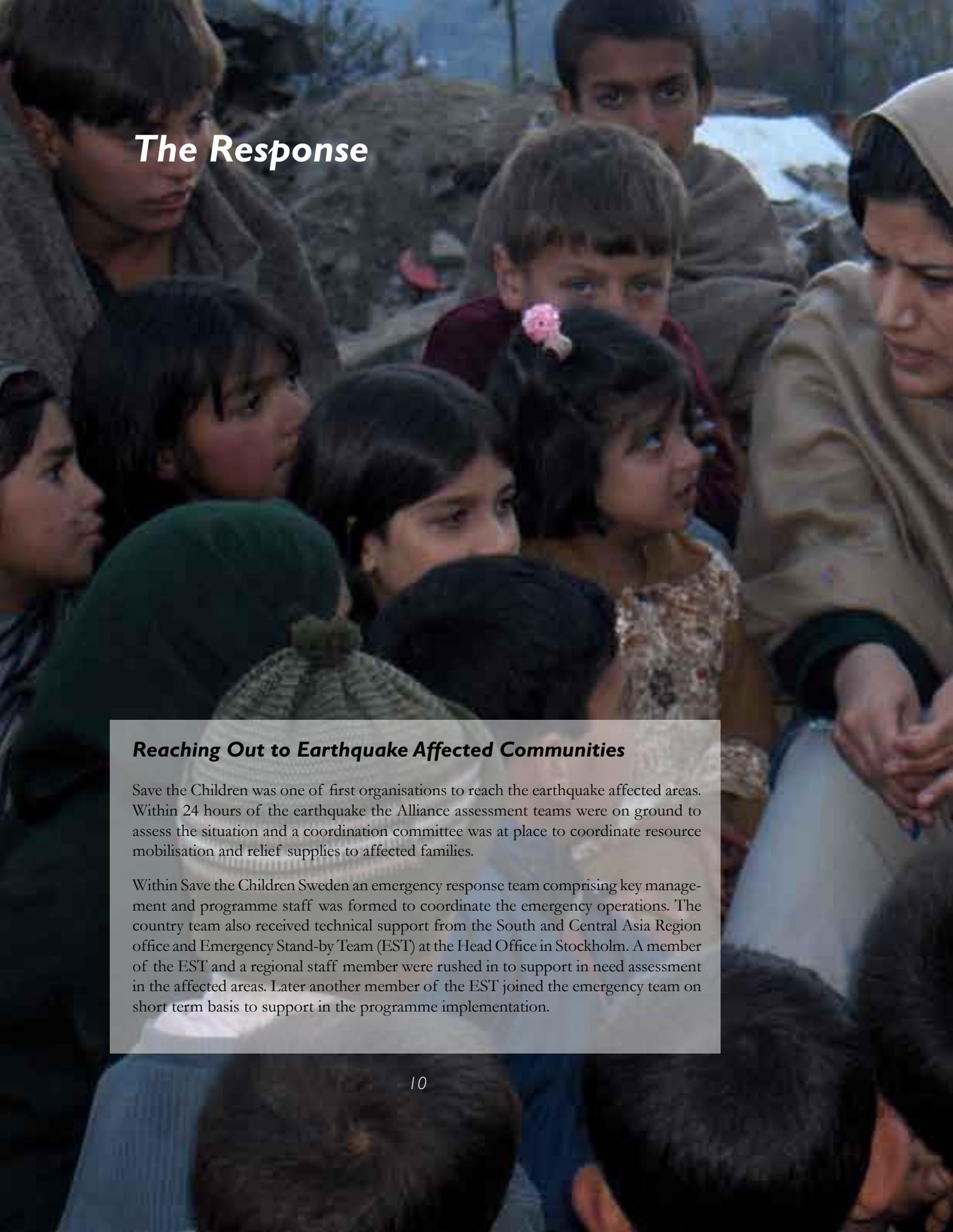
Keeping into account huge damage caused by the earthquake Save the Children Alliance in Pakistan adopted the strategy to cover three most affected parts of the devastated belt – Azad Kashmir, and districts of Battagram and Mansehra in NWFP. Each Alliance partner took lead in one geographic area to implement a coordinated response. Save the Children Sweden was responsible for programme in Mansehra District.

Save the Children Sweden adopted community mobilisation approach as the implementation strategy for the earthquake response. This approach was very successful in post Afghan conflict emergency response where it was experienced that meaningful community participation results in empowering communities to take control of their lives. Adopting the approach community were facilitated to take lead in all phases of the emergency response – from assessment to the survival support and later in the ongoing reconstruction work.

At the outset of the operation one male and one female social animators were selected from each target community on recommendations of the community. These social animators then organised male, female and child community groups. These groups with support from the project staff carried out assessment of damage caused by the earthquake and identified essential inputs for ensuring survival of the affected people, particularly most vulnerable groups in the community. Among the identified needs communities and children were facilitated to prioritise the response. The community prioritised response was implemented with community groups leading the process for relief distribution and ensuring it reaches the most vulnerable families.

In the second step these community groups were facilitated to organise into formal male, female and child committees. The youth was also motivated to form the youth committees. These community bodies were oriented about the child protection concepts and how communities can ensure protection of children in emergencies. The committees were then facilitated to identify protection and development needs of children in their respective communities and take community-led initiatives to respond. These committees are now being supported to organise into formal community based organisations (CBOs). As an exit strategy over the next year Save the Children Sweden will support these CBOs to cluster into one organisation committed to child rights and build its





The Response

Reaching Out to Earthquake Affected Communities

Save the Children was one of the first organisations to reach the earthquake affected areas. Within 24 hours of the earthquake the Alliance assessment teams were on ground to assess the situation and a coordination committee was in place to coordinate resource mobilisation and relief supplies to affected families.

Within Save the Children Sweden an emergency response team comprising key management and programme staff was formed to coordinate the emergency operations. The country team also received technical support from the South and Central Asia Region office and Emergency Stand-by Team (EST) at the Head Office in Stockholm. A member of the EST and a regional staff member were rushed in to support in need assessment in the affected areas. Later another member of the EST joined the emergency team on short term basis to support in the programme implementation.



Assessments

A five member team led by an EST member was sent out to affected areas to assess the situation, identify target areas and recommend the response needed. Those were testing times. A member of the assessment team had lost his brother, a pilot in the Pakistan army aviation, when his copter crashed during a rescue and relief operation. Another member of the team had lost close relatives in the earthquake. Aftershock after aftershock were rocking the area; landslides and road cave ins had blocked access to affected areas and no place was available to operate from or live in. Personal tragedies and difficult circumstances did not hamper the assessment team to perform their professional responsibilities.

Initially the assessment team focused on coordination with UN and other relief agencies present on the ground. But soon it was realised that a large proportion of the affected population in high altitude areas are not willing to migrate from their devastated villages.

The relief assistance was not reaching them due to accessibility problems. Some of these areas were connected to the road, others required hours of climbing to reach hill-top villages. Save the Children Sweden opted to work with these communities.

A participatory methodology actively involving children and adults was adopted to carry out assessment of protection needs of children and their families in these communities. Focus was consulting children as key informants. Children and communities identified shelter, psychosocial rehabilitation and access to education, health and winterisation supplies as immediate needs. Initially separation from families was also identified as a major protection concern. Later on work with communities proved very few children were separated from their families. However, many had lost single or both parents and were in care of the extended family, who themselves were living with meagre means.

Following the assessments Save the Children Sweden selected four union councils in two most affected valleys of the district – Siran and Chattar Plain (both lying 5000 feet above sea level) – to implement a Community Based Child Protection Programme.



Community Based Child Protection

In emergency situations children's are most vulnerable. There is more likelihood of child rights to be violated, neglected or abused. As a result child trafficking, child sexual abuse, harmful child labour, early marriages, discrimination on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity, lack of access to education and health, psychological stress etc. are experienced as common issues. Save the Children Sweden respond to these situations taking "actions to prevent or address the abuse of rights of children ..."

Save the Children Sweden believes actions aimed at child protection could only succeed and become sustainable if those are community driven. Community has the potential, resources and willingness to address these issues. We have experienced that community can easily identify the protection needs and community based responses. Also our experience shows that children can be best source to identify some of the critical issues like sexual abuse, discrimination, early marriages, child trafficking etc. Children together with community can play a positive role in addressing these issues provided trust is expressed in their strength and resourcefulness; they are sensitised on prevailing protection issues and facilitated to organise and take action. Once people are given opportunity they see



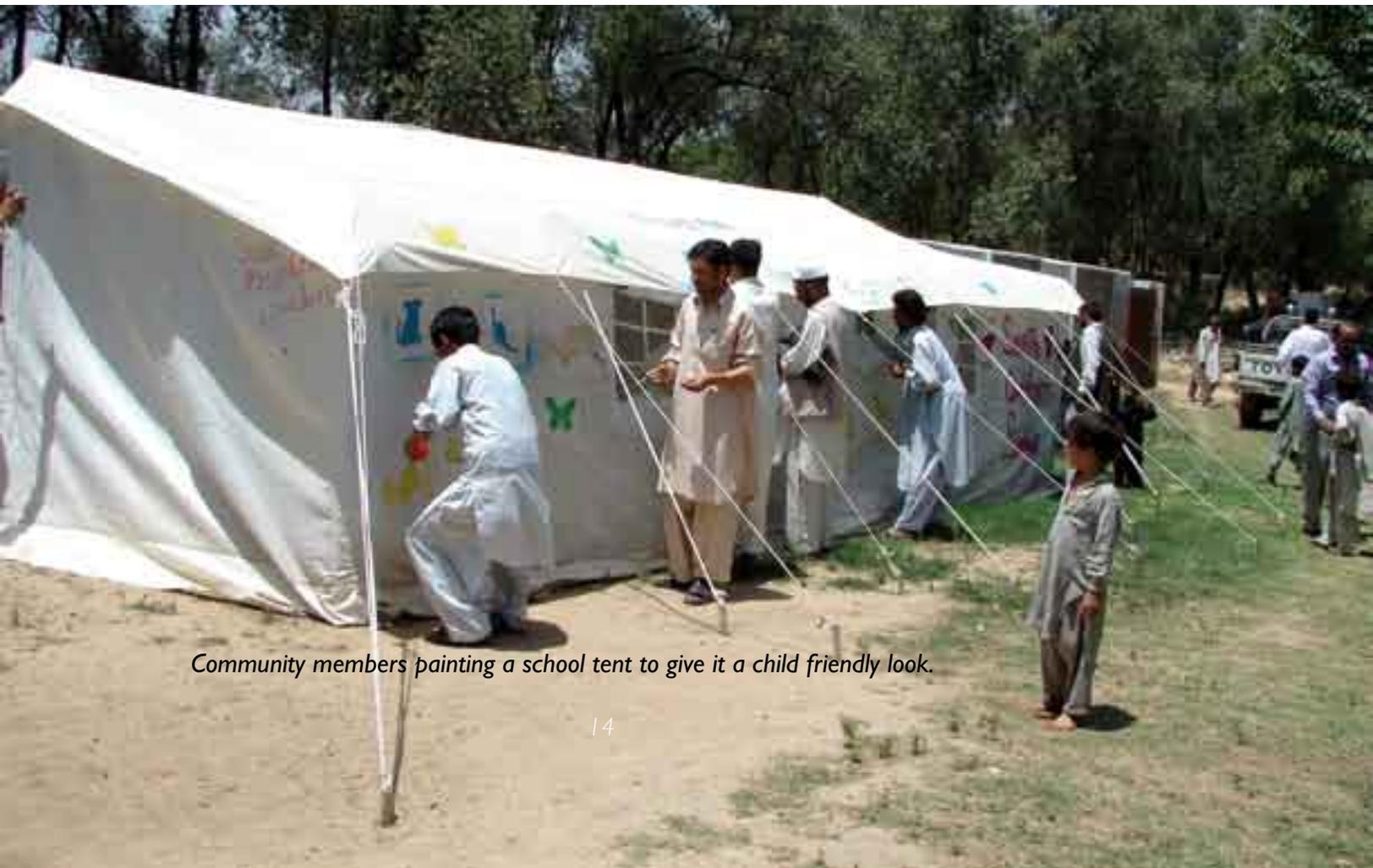
themselves as a resource and are motivated to take further action. This approach leads to non dependency, suitability of response, hence addressing child protection issues on long term basis.

As explained in Strategy Section Save the Children Sweden adopted the same approach to establish a community based child protection mechanism. Adults were facilitated to organise in male and female committees, adolescents and youth into youth clubs and children into child clubs. These structures are being sensitised on the child protection issues and provided capacity building support in child rights, child protection issues and taking community led actions to address child rights abuses on self-help basis and through advocacy with the local government.

The communities actively participated in making village child protection profiles, identifying most vulnerable including separated children, women and child headed households, children with disabilities and children in need of psychosocial support. They contributed their time and resources in establishing facilities providing for protection of rights of the child.

In the first year of operation Save the Children Sweden has facilitated to form:

- **98 village committees – 60 male and 38 female committees**
- **61 youth clubs – 46 boys and 15 girls clubs**
- **55 child clubs – 47 boys and 8 girls clubs.**
- **57 villages committees – 42 male and 15 female – registered as Community Based Organisations**



Community members painting a school tent to give it a child friendly look.



Supply of warm clothes and shoes increased children and their families capacity to cope with harsh winter.

Survival Support

Survival of the affected population was the foremost task. People had no shelter to live in, clothes to wear, utensils to cook and eat. Advent of winter was adding to their woes. Most of the affected areas receive heavy snowfall (from six to eight feet depending on the altitude) during winter months, virtually cutting the area off from rest of the country. In summer months people create stocks of food and essential supplies to cope with the winter. The earthquake had destroyed everything.

Save the Children Sweden assessment teams with support from communities conducted consultations with children, youth and adults to identify their survival needs. Shelter, warm clothes and essential food supplies were prioritised as immediate survival needs. Since World Food Programme was establishing a supply line for essential food, Save the Children Sweden prioritised shelter and warm clothes for children. In some places blankets were also distributed.

For shelter communities suggested tents will not be able to bear snowfall and suggested if they are provided corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets, they can construct tran-

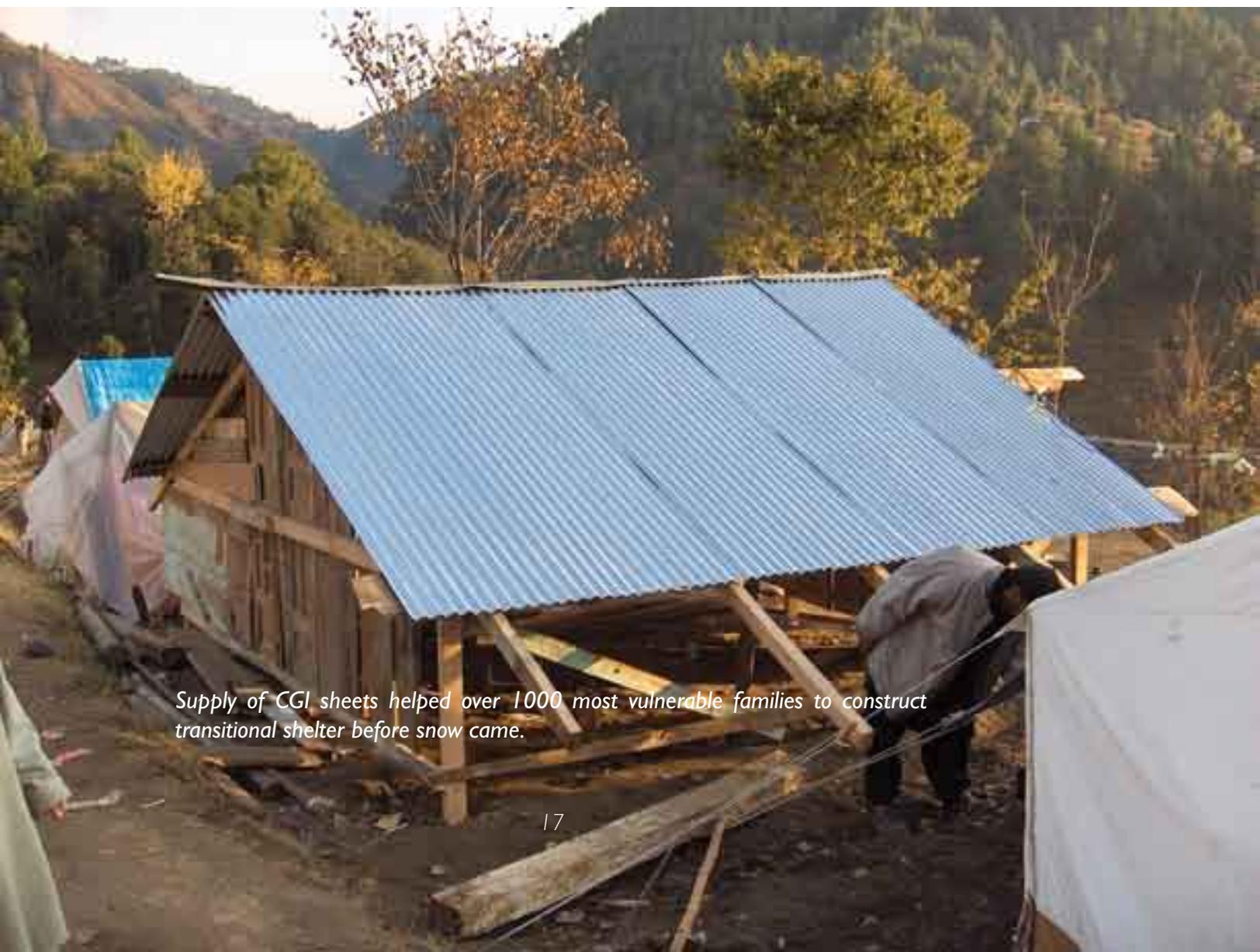


Heavy snow blocked access, making centralised distribution of relief difficult. Staff reached small villages and hemlets on hilltops to provide relief to individual families.

sitional living rooms reclaiming timber from their destroyed houses. Save the Children Sweden immediately adopted the advice. This local wisdom was confirmed when first snow came in late November and majority tents collapsed. All organisations were than in a race against time to replace tents with CGI sheets.

Listening to the communities helped establish a bond between local people and Save the Children Sweden, facilitating active participation of communities in the field operations. They took lead in identifying and enlisting most vulnerable children and families, organising and monitoring distribution of relief supplies, ensuring it reaches all vulnerable families. Communities also contributed monetarily to create community funds, which they have used to initiate livelihood activities in their respective areas.

- **Over 1000 most vulnerable families provided shelter support.**
- **1500 families provided blankets**
- **Over 15,000 children provided warm clothes**
- **Over 5000 children provided shoes and socks.**



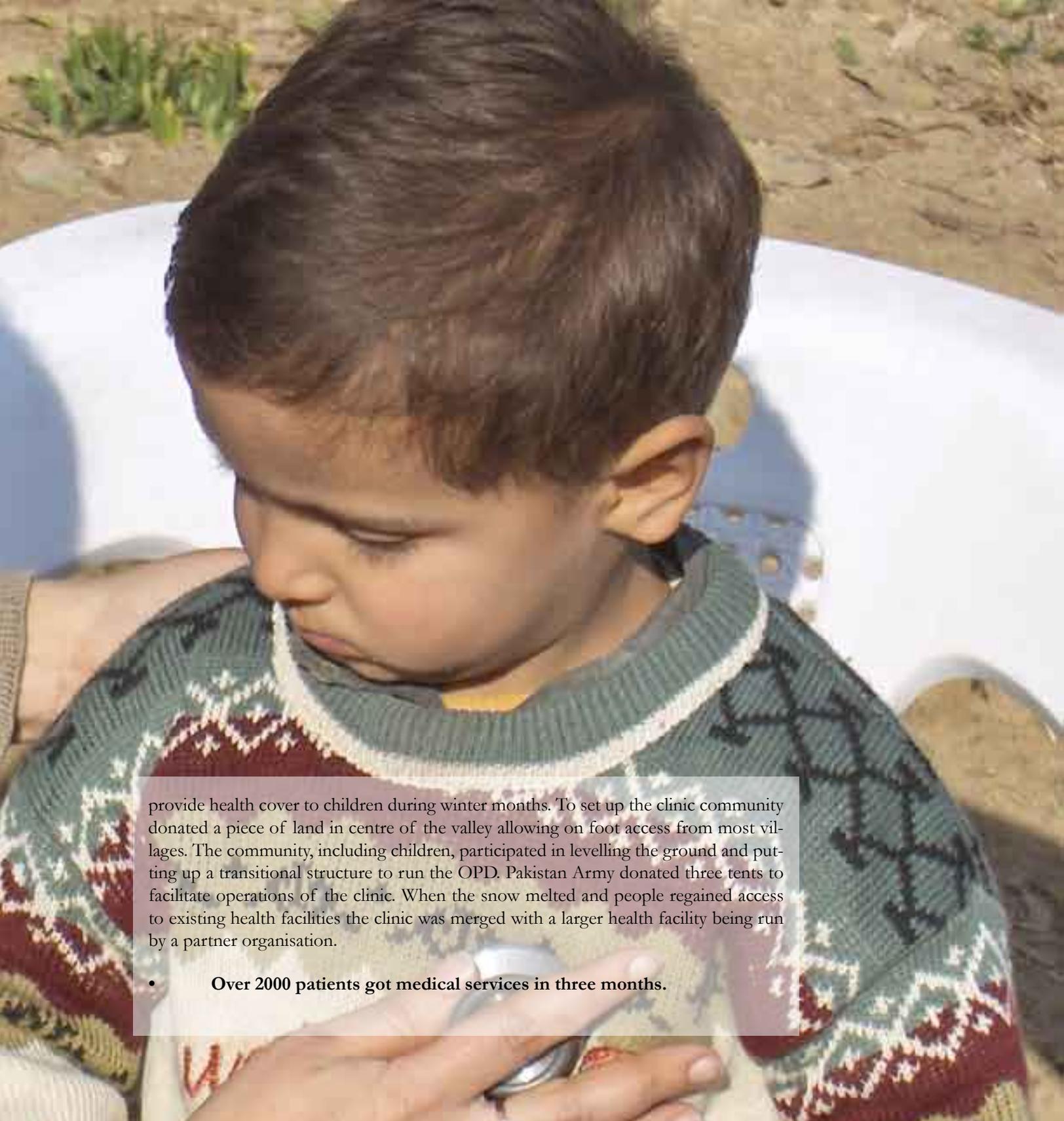
Supply of CGI sheets helped over 1000 most vulnerable families to construct transitional shelter before snow came.



Children Health Unit

Another major survival need of the people was access to health. A health assessment carried out by Save the Children Sweden found 40 per cent of over 1000 examined children suffering from upper respiratory tract infection, 30 percent from scabies and the rest from diarrhoea and other seasonal diseases. Save the Children Sweden initially linked its target communities with clinics run by the health focused organisations. However, in one area (Siran Valley) heavy snowfall in late November restricted mobility of the communities, denying them health protection when they needed it most. Save the Children Sweden responded to this situation by opening a Children Health Unit to





provide health cover to children during winter months. To set up the clinic community donated a piece of land in centre of the valley allowing on foot access from most villages. The community, including children, participated in levelling the ground and putting up a transitional structure to run the OPD. Pakistan Army donated three tents to facilitate operations of the clinic. When the snow melted and people regained access to existing health facilities the clinic was merged with a larger health facility being run by a partner organisation.

- **Over 2000 patients got medical services in three months.**



Child Friendly Spaces

The earthquake and huge devastation it caused to life and infrastructure had a traumatic effect on children. The communities identified symptoms of psychological problems to children like sleeplessness, nightmares, urination in bed, phobia, introvert postures etc. There was immediate need for psychosocial support to children. To respond to these needs Save the Children Sweden set up 20 child friendly spaces (CFSs) where large group of children could come together for a part of each day in a safe and caring environment and re-find a sense of stability through their spontaneous play. Donation of 20 Swedish Army tents fitted with wood-burning heaters provided a protective environment from extreme cold. Communities contributed land for setting up CFSs.

Save the Children Sweden identified facilitators from the community who could understand language and culture of the area. These facilitators were extensively trained in conducting organised play activities that stimulate psychosocial rehabilitation of children. As part of safe play activities traditional games and healthy sports activities were promoted. Tournaments of traditional games and popular sport like cricket were also organised.





Livelihood Support

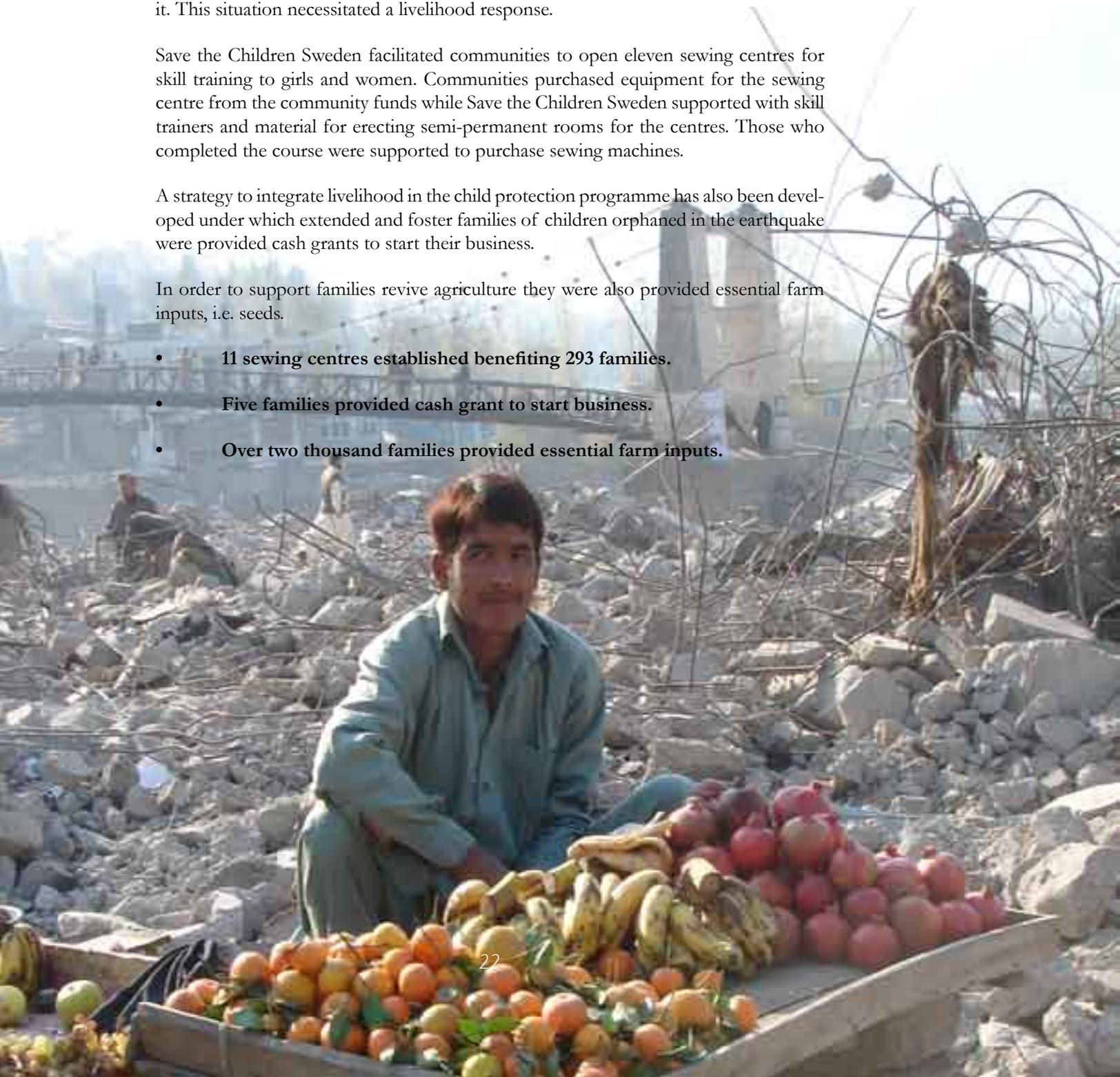
The Mansehra district has an agrarian economy. People have developed small farms by levelling land on hills. Remittances from migrant labour and micro business in nearby semi-urban areas are other sources of income. The earthquake caused complete collapse of the local economy. Huge landslides rolled down patches of farmland in many areas, building collapse destroyed all stocks in shops and immigrant labour rushed back home to support their families. Loss of income has increased the risk of families adopting unhealthy coping mechanism; reported increase in incidents of child labour is a clue to it. This situation necessitated a livelihood response.

Save the Children Sweden facilitated communities to open eleven sewing centres for skill training to girls and women. Communities purchased equipment for the sewing centre from the community funds while Save the Children Sweden supported with skill trainers and material for erecting semi-permanent rooms for the centres. Those who completed the course were supported to purchase sewing machines.

A strategy to integrate livelihood in the child protection programme has also been developed under which extended and foster families of children orphaned in the earthquake were provided cash grants to start their business.

In order to support families revive agriculture they were also provided essential farm inputs, i.e. seeds.

- **11 sewing centres established benefiting 293 families.**
- **Five families provided cash grant to start business.**
- **Over two thousand families provided essential farm inputs.**





A group of children in one of 88 transitional schools constructed

Reviving Education

The impact of the earthquake has been catastrophic in its damage to school infrastructure. In Mansehra District 100 percent of school buildings either collapsed or damaged. This made revival of education an immediate need.

In reviving education clearance of collapsed school buildings was a big task, which required huge resources and time. Alternatively transitional classroom structures could have been set up close to collapsed schools. It too was a resource intensive option as it involved acquiring land for constructing transitional school structures. Save the Children Sweden through community mobilisation prepared the communities to contribute land. Formal deeds were signed with land owners to donate land for the schools. Save



the Children Sweden then supported with essential construction material and skilled labour, while communities contributed timber and unskilled labour for construction of 88 transitional schools.

While reviving education emphasis was made on increasing access of all children to education. 13 schools were established in areas where a school did not exist before. Eight of the new schools are girls schools that include a girls middle school (established with support from British Council), first facility in the area to provide girls education beyond primary grades.

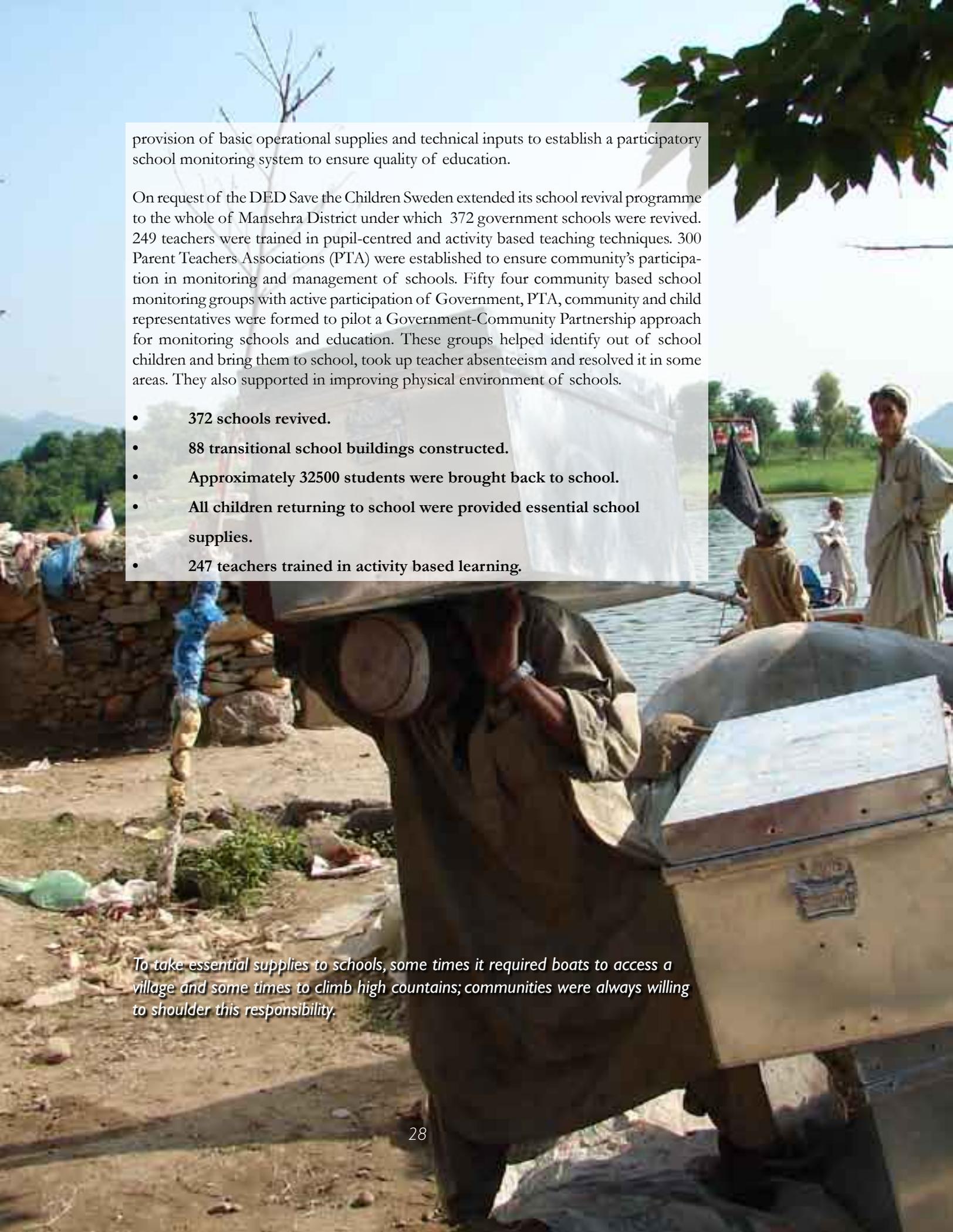
The complete collapse of the education system after the earthquake required extensive support to the local education authorities. Save the Children Sweden supported District Education Department (DED) to re-establish school management system through







Education support activities: (clockwise) children playing in a school compound, training of child club members on child rights and a female community based school monitoring group in session.

A man in a brown tunic and a wide-brimmed hat is carrying a large, rectangular metal box on his shoulder. He is walking on a dirt path. In the background, there is a body of water, a boat, and other people. The scene is outdoors, likely in a rural or mountainous area.

provision of basic operational supplies and technical inputs to establish a participatory school monitoring system to ensure quality of education.

On request of the DED Save the Children Sweden extended its school revival programme to the whole of Mansehra District under which 372 government schools were revived. 249 teachers were trained in pupil-centred and activity based teaching techniques. 300 Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) were established to ensure community's participation in monitoring and management of schools. Fifty four community based school monitoring groups with active participation of Government, PTA, community and child representatives were formed to pilot a Government-Community Partnership approach for monitoring schools and education. These groups helped identify out of school children and bring them to school, took up teacher absenteeism and resolved it in some areas. They also supported in improving physical environment of schools.

- **372 schools revived.**
- **88 transitional school buildings constructed.**
- **Approximately 32500 students were brought back to school.**
- **All children returning to school were provided essential school supplies.**
- **247 teachers trained in activity based learning.**

To take essential supplies to schools, some times it required boats to access a village and some times to climb high countains; communities were always willing to shoulder this responsibility.



Local knowledge and wisdom was driving force to improve the programme.

i. Participatory Programme Development

Save the Children Sweden experienced that a participatory approach for programme development increases ownership among staff and stakeholders. This was reflected from commitment shown by the field staff in reaching out to the communities living on top of hills, most of the time negotiating difficult mountainous terrain on foot for several hours. With only one day breaks a week the male and female field staff lived with communities in most difficult circumstances to ensure timely delivery of relief. This helped build a bond with the communities ensuring their commitment to child protection programme.

This experience also negated the perception that a community mobilisation approach does not suit emergency relief operations and it tends to slow speed of the response. In Save the Children Sweden earthquake response community's participation increased pace of the operation, made the interventions economical by mobilising local resources and increased sustainability of the programme by strengthening the local structures.

Key learning:

Community Participation

- Even in case of mass scale emergencies it is possible to use the community mobilisation approach. Active participation of communities in defining the response and its implementation process improves quality and speed of the response.
- Channelling in the local knowledge in emergency response helps strengthen and mobilise coping mechanisms of the community making the survival support sustainable.
- The community mobilisation approach increases the community's ownership of the programme and the community willingly contributes their time and resources.
- Through the community mobilisation community-based child protection mechanisms can be established on sustainable basis.

Children's Participation

- Establishing forums for children's participation while responding to emergencies of mass scale allow:
 - Reduction in traumatic effect of emergency on children.
 - Rebuilding children's confidence in their abilities to take initiatives for common good.

- ❑ Quick identification of child protection and development needs.
- ❑ Access to most marginalised children and families.

Programme Team Participation

- Participation of all tiers of the organisation in the decision making process in aspects of the programme is important. More the field staff is involved in decision-making process more will be their ownership of the programme.
- Recognising and mobilising individual strengths of the staff involved can boost commitment level of the programme team.
- Creation of forums for the programme staff to review progress and recommend changes in the programme strategy improves quality of the programme and increases benefit for the children.

ii. Resource Mobilisation

Resource mobilisation has always been a key challenge in emergencies of mass scale. The earthquake response programme was not different. Though Save the Children Sweden successfully managed the resource mobilisation in some areas, in others it was a real challenge. In initial days of the response when Save the Children Sweden programme in Mansehra was facing resource constraints private resources were successfully mobilised to maintain supply line of immediate survival support. Establishing a link with local suppliers and ensuring economical supplies of relief goods was also achieved. But mobilising human resources was a challenging task.

A large number of national and international organisations rushed to the area for relief operations, which severely affected job market. A competition started among organisations for hiring skilled local staff, highly inflating the salary levels and staff turn-over. Even the stipend offered to community volunteers by some organisations was higher than what a programme officer of local NGOs was getting before the earthquake. This made acquiring services of skilled workers and maintaining a balance in salary levels of regular programme staff and emergency project workers difficult.

Key learning:

- Recognising and mobilising local knowledge helps identify critical survival needs of the target groups which helps in better utilisation of resources and improving cost benefit ratio.
- Organisational goodwill and individual commitment increases access to local resources, which fills the external resource gap.

- Stronger organisational links with suppliers improves speed and low cost delivery of relief goods.
- An inter-agency code of conduct on acquiring local emergency workers is required to maintain competitiveness of the local job market and avoid negative impact on long term development work in areas affected by emergencies.

iii. Protecting Rights of the Child

Children due to their physical and psychological vulnerabilities need special protection. In emergency situations their vulnerabilities increase with which increases the need to protect survival, protection and development rights of children. Save the Children and other child focused organisation's involvement in the earthquake response was helpful in bringing the child into focus during relief and reconstruction operations. Facilitating communities to take lead in protecting rights of children also addressed many rights issues at the local level and brought children on top of the communities' agenda.

Key learning:

- Child focus organisations like Save the Children Sweden participation in emergency response can bring the child into focus in relief operations of governments and other agencies, maximising benefits for children.
- Communities are best judge of protection needs of children and vulnerable families. Involving communities in relief operations can ensure maximum and sustainable protection of children from vulnerable groups.
- Indigenous social structures are protective for children in their nature. With some motivation and support these structures can be mobilised to ensure protection of children without families or adult support.
- The government in developing countries like Pakistan face the resource constraints that limit their capacity to extend and monitor services needed for protecting basic rights of children. The government-civil society partnerships and creating structures for maximum community participation can ensure fulfilment of child rights.
- Lack of economic opportunities often forces families to put their children in child labour. This risk increases in case of emergencies. By linking child protection initiatives with livelihood support children can be prevented from entering harmful child labour.
- Access to school and teachers' absenteeism are main factors responsible for keeping children out of school. But more serious is families' lack of awareness and attitude towards the child education. This needs to be addressed through massive community mobilisation campaigns.

- Building alliances and joint advocacy by child focused organisations increases influence of the civil society on the government decisions bringing positive changes for children.

iv. Alliance coordination

The earthquake response was a successful experience in terms of a coordinated Save the Children Alliance response to the emergencies. Though some coordination issues at the Alliance Emergency Liaison Team (ELT) level caused some problems, the successful coordination among three Alliance partners in Pakistan offset it. The effective coordination at field level increased visibility of the Alliance programme as well as strengthened voice of the Alliance at key advocacy and coordination forums.

Key learning:

- The ELT shall consult all Alliance partners on ground before making any decisions about implementation of an emergency response. Preferably an ELT mission should visit the field at the outset of the emergency operations and coordinate with the Alliance partners on ground.
- The ELT while deciding on the lead organisation should also develop a TOR of the lead organisation clearly explaining roles and responsibilities of the lead and participating organisations.
- The Alliance shall develop a common Emergency Preparedness Plan in all emergency prone countries/regions to increase quality, speed and coordination of the response.
- The joint Alliance appeal is effective; but mechanisms for distribution of funds generated should be decided before launching the appeal.

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