

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top left shows a green and brown landmass. A large, dark, swirling storm system is visible over the ocean, extending from the coast. The sun is shining from the bottom right, creating a bright, hazy glow over the storm and the sea. The text "RISK WISE" is centered over the storm area.

RISK WISE



# Reporting IBC – a Turkish NGO's response to the Pakistan earthquake

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**T**he International Blue Crescent (IBC)<sup>1</sup> is an emerging Turkish non-governmental organization (NGO), working since 1999 to improve the lives of the suffering people, especially the most disadvantaged, both in Turkey and in other countries, including Albania, Kosovo, India, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria and Sudan. As its mission states, IBC has been working to help in alleviating human suffering, hunger and illiteracy among all people, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, colour, social origin, religion, belief, language, political opinion, gender, age, sexual orientation or genetic and physical features.

In April 2003, with the aim and intention of increasing its effectiveness internationally, IBC became a member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), headquartered in Geneva; and at the 13th ICVA General Assembly in 2006, IBC was elected to its Board of Directors. In July 2006, it was given 'Special Consultative Status' by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). IBC also has a member in the COPPEM Presidency Council. Headquartered in Palermo, COPPEM is the Standing

Committee for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities.

## The Pakistan earthquake and IBC's response

On Saturday 8 October 2005, at 8:50 am, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck the India-Pakistan border with more than 140 aftershocks, causing extensive damage in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Reports indicated that more than 82,000 people were killed and more than 3.3 million people were left injured or homeless.

In the post-disaster response, the international NGOs added their inputs to the Federal Relief Commission's (FRC) joint collaboration with the military and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), leading to an effective coordination of the relief process. Later on, the planning for rehabilitation and longer-term development was led by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA)<sup>2</sup> and the core group of donors.

While generally challenges were encountered in managing the transition from military back to civilian administration, from UN coordinated support for relief to donor mobilization of long-term resources and from a humanitarian response to a development process, it can be said that the context of the emergency response in Pakistan was unique in the sense that it involved cooperative and competent national authorities.

## The IBC Pakistan mission

IBC's mission in Pakistan started one week after the tragic event of the earthquake, the aim of the first interventions in the field being to respond to the primary needs of victims as winter approached in this high-altitude environment and the settlements of mainly Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) were difficult to access.

Consequently, IBC has continued its post-disaster intervention through different rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. In parallel with its activities in the field, IBC has received long-term grant permission to work in Pakistan from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, Economic Affairs Division (EAD). After the emergency phase, IBC continued to implement its projects in the framework of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) signed with ERRA.



Image: IBC Archive

Beneficiaries loading vans: during December 2006-January 2007, beneficiaries of IBC's Winter Relief Distribution Project received kitchen sets, blankets, water tanks, quilts and pillows



The Pakistan mission's activities have been financially or technically supported at different stages and in different sectors by donors as Malteser International, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), UN-Habitat, Trocaire Ireland, and other private donations.

#### **IBC activities in the emergency relief phase**

IBC's immediate response after the earthquake in Pakistan consisted in the following activities:

- Distribution of food packages, October-November 2005 — provision of supplies for two weeks, for 600 families in Rawlakot/Ali Sojal Tehsil
- Distribution of non-food items (NFIs), November 2005-January 2006 — provision of shelter and basic survival NFIs to 200 families in the high-up villages in Bagh District (tents, CGI sheets, bedding sets, stoves, kitchen sets and shelter fixing tools).

The emergency relief phase was planned to last around six months after the October 2005 earthquake struck northern Pakistan. However, even one month after the disaster occurred, a number of activities were initiated to support the speedy recovery of the affected population, concurrently with ongoing humanitarian and life-saving operations.

On the other hand, the challenging environment of the earthquake-affected area of Kashmir proved that providing only immediate post-disaster relief activities would not be enough, as the region is negatively affected by weather conditions at different times of year (winter and Monsoon months) and the lack of infrastructure creates a permanent need for intervention. For example, IBC had to keep a bulldozer at its field camp in Salmia UC for a year, ready to clear the surrounding roads which were blocked regularly due to landslides or snow. This prolonged need for intervention led to an initiative to support some village committees to start a road clearance and construction project. Later on, this project proved a major support for rural housing reconstruction, in terms of facilitating access for transportation of construction materials and so on.

One year after the earthquake, during December 2006-January 2007, heavy snow affected hundreds of households in the area where IBC operated, cutting off access to major cities nearby and forcing people to demand immediate support from the teams deployed in the field. In this particular case, a Winter Relief Distribution Project was implemented with the prompt financial support of donors, addressing 956 vulnerable households. The beneficiaries received kitchen sets, blankets, water tanks, quilts and pillows.

Some months later, in April 2007, due to long rains causing major landslides in Salmia, a Landslides Victims Support project was required. During this emergency, 147 households received CGI sheets, shelter fixing tools and plastic sheets. The assessments and work done during the implementation of this one-time intervention led later on to inputs to a Policy Paper for the Landless, on the common contribution of UN Habitat, NGOs and ERR.

The Sarbala Village Support Initiative is one example illustrating the need for prolonged emergency intervention mixed with speedy recovery activities. The first intervention in the village under the IBC/AJDC venture included the distribution of NFIs after the earthquake in 2005. Between March 2006 and January 2007, activities included road clearance provided after major landslides, erection of large-sized tents for the boys' and the girls' primary schools, distribution of winter jackets to the students of the primary schools,

Image: Florian Kopp



IBC worked to support children of all ages following the earthquake

distribution of educational, recreational (toys) and hygiene kits to 250 pre-school-age children, and installation of a playground in the village.

Given all the challenges in implementing post-disaster activities in AJK, the early recovery took a long time. Now, the aim is to shift the focus from saving lives to restoring livelihoods, thus effectively preventing recurrence of disasters and harnessing conditions for human development.

#### **IBC's involvement in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase**

The common efforts of ERR, UN-Habitat and NGO partner organizations led to the elaboration and implementation of the 'Building Back Better' strategy for rural housing reconstruction. The basic principles of this approach included the fact that the reconstruction houses will follow the principles of enablement; local known construction technology will be promoted w





Image: IBC archive

Hands-on training was given through the construction of earthquake resistant model houses for the most vulnerable households

pragmatic improvements for seismic resistance; reconstruction will be promoted based on timeliness, practicality, basic seismic safety and local technology; future reliance of the community on technical assistance will be minimized by creating a self-sustainable talent pool in earthquake resistant construction; local uniqueness will be respected over monolithic implementation of standards, and reconstruction efforts will support environmentally friendly building techniques.

#### **Safe building training for rural housing reconstruction**

For the implementation of the owner-driven Rural Housing Reconstruction Strategy, IBC took over two Union Councils — Salmia and Sena Daman, both situated in Hattian Tehsil, Muzaffarabad District, AJK. The activities of these two projects were implemented by mobile teams (each team having one engineer, one mason, one carpenter, one male and one female social mobilizer) covering the area for community mobilization and formation of Village Reconstruction Committees.

The main focus of the projects was to train self-builders and local artisans in earthquake-safe construction techniques. All training modules were supported by visual material and using accessible language. Information materials with simple drawings and pictures were distributed and explained. All members of the mobile teams were trained before the start of the project by experts from UN-Habitat and the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), Nepal.

Both projects included door-to-door assistance for self-builders, with IBC mobile teams monitoring and technically advising on earthquake resistant guidelines. IBC also assisted the monitoring visits of the army inspection (AI) teams in evaluating progress and supporting the beneficiaries receiving housing instalments from the Government.

The Safe Building Training and Technical Assistance for Rural Housing Reconstruction project in Salmia UC was implemented between May 2006 and June 2007, covering 16 main villages and 45 sub-villages. The four mobile teams working in the UC provided training to 297 masons, 411 carpenters, 22 steel fixers, 9,205 male self-builders and 388 female self-builders. The training sessions (both

theoretical and practical) were held at IBC Rawal Gali field camp (also using multimedia) and at different venues in the sub-villages. Hands-on training was facilitated through work contribution of the trainees in building earthquake resistant model houses for 80 of the most vulnerable households (headed by widows, disabled people and senior citizens). As part of the technical support component of the project, tools sets were distributed to the self-builders, assistance was provided for the registration of the landless, village link roads were cleared and constructed, facilitating the transport of construction materials to the villages.

The Safe Building Training for Rural Housing Reconstruction programme in Sena Daman UC covered 19 main villages and was implemented between March and December 2007. Five mobile teams were active in community mobilization and lobby for use of earthquake-safe construction guidelines. During ten months of project implementation, IBC trained 2,353 masons, 798 carpenters, 3,866 steel fixers, 3,014 male self-builders and 707 female self-builders.

#### **Reconstruction in the health sector**

In the framework of rehabilitation and reconstruction policy in the health sector, IBC is involved in the physical reconstruction of eight basic health units (BHUs) in Muzaffarabad and Bagh districts (two BHUs in villages that were earlier targeted by IBC during the emergency phase), in AJK. The project was implemented with the financial support and in partnership of Malteser International, which is also going to provide the necessary furniture and equipment and also eventually support strengthening the referral system.

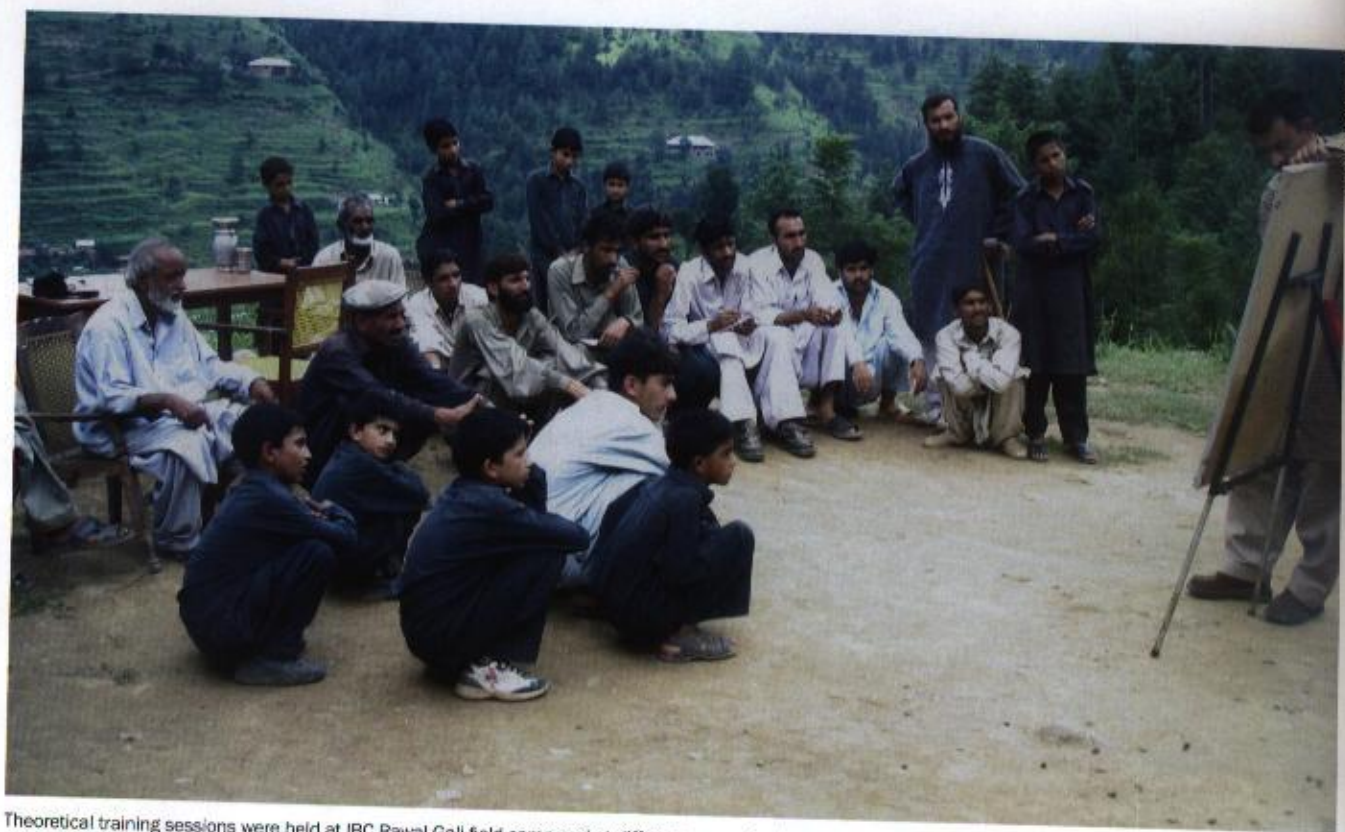
At each site, IBC is constructing earthquake resistant clinics (with structural and architectural designs based on detailed soil investigations and approved by the National Engineering Society of Pakistan (NESPAP), the technical consultant of ERRA), as well as two additional accommodation quarters for the lady health visitors (LHVs) and medical officers (MOs) to be stationed at these clinics.

#### **Reconstruction in education sector**

As in the health sector, the reconstruction of education facilities must follow the standards imposed by the regulating body, ERRA — all physical reconstruction projects have to pass the requirements of the technical body, NESPAP, before receiving a Non-Objection Certificate (NOC) for start of work. In the framework of the venture with AJDC in Sarbala — the 'adopted' village for reconstruction and rehabilitation — IBC is reconstructing three governmental school buildings: boys' and girls' primary schools and a girls' middle school. The schools will be provided with necessary furniture, ready to start the new educational year.

Following IBC's involvement in developing and introducing earthquake-safe and easy-to-build technologies, plans are being developed for IBC to take over the physical reconstruction of an additional 100 schools, to be sponsored by ERRA itself.





Theoretical training sessions were held at IBC Rawal Gali field camp and at different venues in the sub-villages

### Community development

As a strategy for better effectiveness in implementation of its projects, for more comprehensive development of community ties and sustainability follow-up, IBC focused its interventions in selected areas, instead of spreading them over too many districts of the earthquake-affected area.

One of the villages targeted and addressed by IBC through all the post-disaster phases is Sarbala village — known to locals as 'the village in the sky' due to being situated on a mountaintop at a 7,500-foot elevation, at the border between Muzaffarabad and Bagh districts in AJK. The community of Sarbala, with a population of around 200 families, has been part of all IBC intervention stages.

Besides its share in the emergency phase, the rural housing reconstruction project that IBC has implemented in the same UC, the schools reconstruction and all other small initiatives in this particular village, IBC has built a community centre as a space for interaction and learning for Sarbala and surrounding villages. The multi-purpose building is providing a meeting space for the community, for common decision making and also for hosting the community's most important events; a space for initiation of vocational training and income generation for women (sewing and embroidery classes); a space for day-care, leisure and learning for pre-school children; modern skills learning for the youth (basic computer use skills supported by a small computer lab), and a facility for school support and learning, with the establishment of a small library (the first ever in the village or its surroundings).

### In summary

Being impartial in its approach toward targeted beneficiaries and in relations with its various international donors, being non-political

and non-religious but nevertheless coming from a majority Muslim country, IBC definitely has an advantage in working in parts of the world where these can be very sensitive issues. In addition, given the general well-received Turkish response by Pakistani society, IBC has managed to do its work in very challenging locations and conditions, encountering fewer difficulties than those reported at times by other agencies.

Summarizing the efforts put into Pakistan earthquake response, it can be said that IBC had a very interesting opportunity to be involved in original approaches and coordination (such as its participation in Clusters and Humanitarian Hubs, and the strategic approach of owner-driven reconstruction), to be working with both civilian and military entities involved in the relief and to act in extremely challenging environments. However, when quantifying and comparing the resources used, the timeframe of intervention and targets achieved, it can be observed that much more effort has been put into the Pakistan operation than in other emergencies, due to factors such as the extreme working environment, both geographically and climatically, lack of infrastructure and lack of qualified manpower.

From mountaintop village community meetings to strategic meetings at Islamabad level, from reaching earthquake victims by helicopter to providing aid on footpaths, using porters and mules, from rubble to building hope, the Pakistan response has been for IBC an amazing adventure and continuous learning process.