# Project toAssist ERRA and its Partners to Restore Livelihoods in the Earthquake Affected Areas of Pakistan

## Field Experience – Case Studies

## Project Title

**Construction of grinding mills from traditional to contemporary**

### Project objectives

Construction of grinding mills within a union council aims to make the communities self-reliant. While the shift from traditional water mills to generator operated grinding mills is expected to result in community savings and also ensure sustainability.

### Context

Kewai union council (UC) has three revenue villages - Kewai, Bonja and Paras – with a population of 13,788 in Mansehra district. The earthquake killed 987 people, damaged 2,924 houses and totally destroyed agriculture related infrastructure in the union council. Relief International, the NGO partner of DRU together with the community organization prioritised the community needs such as the rehabilitation and reconstruction of terraces, irrigation channels, grinding mills, bridle paths, and water reservoirs during the Community Livelihoods Rehabilitation Plans (CLRP) planning process. Other needs identified were distribution of agriculture inputs to 70 vulnerable households, vocational training in stitching and sewing, purchase of a thresher and kitchen gardening.

### Population groups targeted

One of the negative economic impacts of the earthquake was the increase in the cost of grinding wheat and maize as the local farmers had to send their grain to the neighbouring Balakot town for grinding. The local population of Kewai union council was directly affected which is why the community decided to construct five grinding mills.

### The project

Prior to the earthquake, there were four water mills grinding maize and wheat for the entire population of the union council alongside catering to the people of the adjoining areas. Community consultation during the planning phase revealed that the high cost of rehabilitation work, irregular water supply from the stream feeding the mills, inaccessibility of water mills location and the low grinding capacity of water mills made it infeasible to rehabilitate them, therefore, the community opted to replace the water mills with generator operated grinding mills.

With the construction of the five grinding mills there was a shift from traditional water mills to generator operated mills that had a higher grinding capacity at almost a similar cost price of a water mill. Grinding mills built on accessible locations were handed over to the community thereby lowering the cost of grinding from RS 250/KG to RS 100/KG as the farmers no longer had to send their produce to Balakot. It is expected


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*Destroyed water mill in Kewai union council, Mansehra*

*Relief International and community members in a meeting*

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to take three years to cover the building costs of the mills and after that the community will revise the rates for grinding so as to ensure sustainability.

This case study is a part of a series of studies to document the experience gained implementing the *Livelihoods Rehabilitation Strategy* developed by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) of Pakistan as part of its response to the October 8, 2005 earthquake which hit the north of the country and killed over 78,000 people. The Strategy is implemented by ERRA, Government line-departments and Non-Governmental Organizations, with technical assistance provided through FAO using Sida funding.

## Building capacities

The building of generator operated grinding mills was a definite shift from the traditional water mills directly adding skills to the farmers engaged in the planning and construction of the mills while indirectly benefitting the whole of the local population. The regular interaction between farmers, NGO partners and line departments was a way to exchange not only experience and knowledge on grinding mills but also agricultural issues they felt to be important. With community savings as one of the objectives of the activity, gradually, the project staff suggested other livelihoods interventions such as developing kitchen gardens and irrigation channels that could be undertaken with the money saved. Different ways of getting these initiatives started were discussed motivating the community farmers to take the lead in the process.

*One of the constructed grinding mill at village Lassan Kewai union council, Mansehra*


Discussion among the community farmers and their peers is a major factor in the dispersion of other initiatives and during their discussion they could then easily make a cost-benefit analysis, which can turn out to be a major convincing factor.

Another positive was the inclusion of community farmers in the planning process and implementation of the construction of the mills thereby enhancing their understanding about group dynamics, collective decision-making an implementation and mechanism to operate the enterprise on sustainable basis.

In addition, government line departments and NGO staff realized the benefits of shifting from traditional watermills to generator operated mills. The low cost intervention also enhanced their ability to plan and implement effectively.

### Challenges

- ✓ Consensus building at planning stage
- ✓ Operating grinding mills on sustainable basis
- ✓ Shift from traditional water mills to generator operated mills
- ✓ Bureaucratic hurdles in the Community Rehabilitation Livelihoods Plans process

### Opportunities

- ✓ Cost saving with the use of the grind mills
- ✓ Grind mills to positively impact the community livelihoods
- ✓ Increase in crop production due to locally available grinding facilities
- ✓ Start of some new agriculture initiatives

## Considerations for replication

The rehabilitation of grinding mills is indirectly impacting the increase in crop production. Nevertheless, without

a specialised study, the impact on grain production will be hard to ascertain. Even without such hard evidence, the intervention was considered worthwhile as Khusal, President of Volunteer Organization (VO) Lassan commented, "This year there is increased cultivation of wheat as previously due to high cost of grinding, it was not cost-effective to produce wheat. After the construction of grinding mills, the farmers from the village and also the neighbouring villages are also cultivating their fallow lands." In addition, the grinding mills will contribute towards food security of the area and elsewhere.

The experience described here can be successfully scaled-up/replicated under the following conditions:

- ✓ the intervention is carried out within an integrated policy and programme development framework at district, national (and sometimes regional) level rather than in isolation, to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and gain ownership, and that it is sustainable and coherent with other interventions;
- ✓ through participatory approaches, beneficiaries are involved in all stages of project activities: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- ✓ the construction of grinding mills is preceded by community group formation and capacity building (basic management, conflict resolution, etc) to ensure effective participation, ownership and sustainability:
- ✓ the construction of grinding mills is accompanied by relevant training, in particular maintenance and upkeep;
- ✓ The alternative technology of generator operated grinding mills provided to the community can be replicated in water scarce areas.
- ✓ The linkage of the community is developed with the suppliers of the machinery needed for construction of mills which can be shared with others interested in setting up grinding mills.

The best measure of the success of the intervention was the fact that neighbouring union councils asked the project for help in constructing grinding mills. Building on this success, the project provided the communities of these grinding mills with some quality vegetable seeds for planting in the new initiative of kitchen gardens. This way, the households' incomes will be further supplemented in the coming years.

For future similar interventions, efforts will be made to use the group formation as a way to also enter into micro-saving. The regular meetings of the farmers can be used as a way to encourage the community of the importance of savings. While generators were provided for free by the project for the mills, they will need to be maintained – and repaired – in future. The peer pressure of the group can ensure that each farmer is able to put aside a few rupees per meeting, thus ensuring the necessary funds to start new initiatives next year. Possibly at a later stage the same group could even run a micro-loan scheme.

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