



# Humanitarian Resilience Journal

ISSUE 9

## REAL LIFE HEROES





The flagship regional platform of Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP), was founded by six countries of Asia including Pakistan for improving the preparedness and emergency response to disasters by strengthening the capacity of local humanitarian actors. The initiative is being implemented by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In line with the regional initiative, Pakistan Resilience Partnership (PRP) was established in 2018, under the umbrella of NDMA. The objective of the PRP is to improve the interface and partnership between PRP partners namely government, local humanitarian organizations, private sector, media and academia for enhancing their capacities through partnerships, knowledge resources, training, and networking opportunities. The Pakistan Resilience Partnership is contributing towards strengthening the disaster preparedness and emergency response capacity at national and local levels in disaster-prone areas within the country. The PRP strategy aims to develop the local humanitarian networks comprising of National Governments, Local Humanitarian Organizations, Private Sector, Media and Academia, which will result in enhanced coordination and information exchange, during the period of emergencies caused due to disasters.



# PREFACE

Humanitarian Resilience Journal is a biannual magazine published with the support of Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP) under the umbrella of Pakistan Resilience Partnership (PRP). This initiative has been undertaken to bring forward different perspectives on the general humanitarian landscape of Pakistan. Each issue of the journal is dedicated to a specific topic of national importance. The contributions to this journal are purely on volunteer basis.

The ninth issue of the journal is dedicated to the humanitarian workers. The dedication, perseverance and self-sacrifice of these real-life heroes represent the best of humanity as they respond to the crisis and the massive increase in humanitarian needs it triggers.

These first responders are often people in need themselves – refugees, members of civil-society organizations and local health workers. They bring food, shelter, health care, protection and hope to others amid conflict, displacement, disaster and disease. In order to honor their sacrifices and commitment this issue of journal has been dedicated to these real-life heroes

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# Holding the Nerves to Perform in Panic

Putting learning into Practice

26th April's afternoon witnessed horrific bomb blast at Karachi University when a suicide attacker exploded into a van carrying foreign teachers including the director of the Chinese-built Confucius Institute and, two faculty members. The horrible incident left four casualties and same number of injuries on the spot. According to initial reports from Bomb Disposal Squad, the blast was a suicide attack with three to four kilograms of high explosives with around one and a half kilograms of medium size steel ball bearings used, adding that the suicide jacket or belt was exploded with the electric push button.

Ali Sohaib, one of the students of the university, was the first one on the scene to respond. He heard the blast and ran towards the burning vehicle, shouting for help. With the assistance of another student Ali brought fire extinguishers from the nearby university building and kept trying to extinguish the fire and, broke the glass window of the vehicle and took severely injured driver out of the car who unfortunately, expired on the spot.



*"The blast was heard miles away and shattered the windowpanes of nearby buildings. The burning vehicle was too hot to get near. Most of the students had already left in their respective points at around 1:30 pm."*

~ Ali Sohaib

Ali had recently received basic first aid training from the Red Crescent and he immediately put its training to work. He cautioned the gathering crowd to stay at the safe distance. There were four injured lying outside the vehicle, which include one Chinese person, two rangers' personnel, one university security guard and one civilian. Ali gave First Aid to the severely injured Chinese and tried to control his head bleeding with his





scarf and placed him on a chair. He did his best to manage the situation. In the meanwhile, Pakistan ranger arrived and took control of the scene. Within 15 minutes, ambulances came to take the injured to hospital, the severely injured Chinese person was sifted with the chair along with two more. Ali got injured himself trying to give First Aid, getting minor cut on his left hand and first degree burn on the right wrist.

“I luckily recently had attended the First aid training session of PRCS organized in the university that really helped me not to panic and stay calm to manage the situation while providing medical aid. I appreciate PRCS-First aid training programme.”

~ Ali Sohaib

Ali is a resident of Sialkot who has come to Karachi to pursue his masters in gender studies from University of Karachi. Ali has always been passionate about humanitarian work and a member of Pakistan Boys Scout. In the 14th National & 2nd SAANSO (South Asian Association of National Scout Organization) Scouts Jamboree, held in December 2014, Ali achieved second position. He has recently completed his internship in Humans Rights Commission of Pakistan. Owing to his enthusiasm and commitment Ali has been nominated as ambassador of G-17 Pakistan Sustainable Development Goals for 1 Year Training Program. Ali is an inspiration to all youth of the country.





# Building Safer Communities by Enhancing Local Resilience Through Community Support and Engagement.

Prevention is always better than response. Developing community resilience through education, support and consultation has been the focus of one rescue officer. District Emergency Officer (DEO) Ms. Tahira Khan. She has the honor of being the only female DEO in Punjab Rescue Service 1122. Her dedication to work and excellence in performance of her duties earned her best DEO in Punjab for two years straight in 2017 and 2018.



Tahira Khan joined the rescue emergency services in 2006 as the first female to be part of emergency operations team as emergency officer (operations and administration). She earned this position by obtaining the first position in medical wing training of 600 trainees. She was also the first female District Emergency Officer (DEO) in Punjab Emergency Service Department.

Throughout her carrier she has been focused on developing safer communities by engaging the community. To achieve her objectives, she started engaging the community in developing self-resilience by establishing Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). She was able to







Tahira Khan

establish 72 CERT teams in the district Chiniot on self-help basis. The CERT from district Chiniot won the first National CERT challenge. This success gave Tahira further strength and motivation to work with the community.

She has always been focused on providing a sustainable solution to minimize the common occurring emergency situations in her area of operations. She had realized that the number of incidents involving victims falling into water wells was very high. To cater this problem, she started engaging the community and persuaded them to construct 3 to 4 feet high boundary wall around the wells to protect people from falling in them. Her persuasion payed off and as a result all the well in district Chiniot have been protected by a safety wall which have been constructed by the

Ms. Tahira believes that being a female DEO requires motivation, strength and willingness where one has to deal with multiple and varied emergencies on daily basis in operations. Working as female and with family and kids where you have to be ready 24 hours for an emergency is also not easy. Yet she has been outperforming all her colleagues and even won the appreciation from Punjab chief minister for her work during the floods of 2014.





Ms. Tahira feels most proud for her work in establishing a model village in the district Chiniot. She and her team were able to mobilize the community and the government authorities to work together to transform the village Bhallo. The whole village was cleaned and repainted. Dustbins and garbage collection and management was introduced. Street light and street boards with street names were posted. A sewerage pond adjacent to the village schools was converted into park for the kids. Four water filtration plants were installed. All this was achieved through developing a sense of community among the people through consultations and appreciation. Different committees of the community were established with specific roles and responsibilities. The rescue team were able to completely reshape not just the village but also developed a sense of responsibility in the community. She received appreciation from Governor Punjab for her Community Safety Activities in District Chiniot, in the year 2019.

Ms. Tahira went beyond her duties to establish a model village which is safer more resilient and sustainable. As a result, she and her team have not only managed the emergencies but have reduced the possibilities of occurrences of emergencies. They have also equipped the community to better response to any future disaster or emergency.



# Fighting Hunger and Malnutrition for the sake of children

Real leaders are not afraid of a challenge. But 2020 presented obstacles like never before. In response, tens of thousands of people worldwide stepped up to save lives while putting their own at risk.

Humanitarian workers stand out as particularly inspiring. In addition to overcoming tremendous uncertainty and fear of Covid-19, they faced down floods, droughts, historic swarms of locusts, and other crises to treat potentially life-threatening malnutrition among the world's most vulnerable communities.

Women also have been on the front lines of the global response, often directing teams, working remarkably long hours in unimaginably difficult situations, sacrificing the ability to spend time with their own families to help others. Such is the case of Dr Ayesha Aziz who runs a nutrition program in Sindh, Pakistan, where nearly half of children under five suffer from severe acute malnutrition – the deadliest form of hunger. She oversees approximately 2,800 community health care workers who go door-to-door, screening children ages six months to five years. Those who need treatment are referred to a treatment center where they can receive therapeutic foods; or a local hospital if they have pneumonia or other complications.



Dr. Ayesha Aziz



Sindh was the first region of Pakistan hit by COVID-19. A lockdown was instituted, and fear swept through communities and among health care workers. Many people stopped going to health centers to get the nutrition treatment they needed. “Just getting people out and reaching the sites is one of the major challenges,” said Dr. Aziz.

Health care workers were concerned, as they lacked the personal protective equipment (PPE) essential to stay safe. Supply chains were interrupted, causing some nutrition and other medical treatments to be unavailable for days at a time.

Nevertheless, the team worked tirelessly with the local, district, and national governments to ensure that the nutrition centers were able to remain open and safely operating. After several weeks, PPE was procured so that the health care workers could safely continue their work, but the number of children traveling for nutrition treatment fell by approximately 75%.

Dr. Aziz and her team overcame all of the obstacles to screening almost 500,000 children and are working to screen nearly one million more in the next several months. About 80,000 have been treated for malnutrition. Despite the ongoing threat of COVID-19, the team still goes door-to-door to monitor the children’s progress and help their families avoid a relapse into malnutrition.

# Pioneering with Passion

Being a pioneer in any field brings a lot of responsibilities and expectations. However, pioneering a rescue service in a country like Pakistan brings with it added pressures from the community.

Zain a rescue emergency officer from Shangla was the first person to respond to the first ever emergency call to the newly established emergency service Rescue 1122. He recalls the day with a sign of relief that when on 10 October 2004 a call was received in the rescue services Lahore about a bomb blast in an Imam Bargah at the Mochi Gate. He recalls that the we had just launched the emergency service in Pakistan. The ambulances and other equipment had not



Zain ul Haq

been field tested yet and straight away we were sent to such a critical response. Our training and preparations were put to test early on. The stakes were very high as a lot of efforts and funding had been spent on setting up the service. He recalls that when we reached the bomb site there was chaos everywhere. People were screaming from pain and horror. At the beginning we felt very nervous but soon the training kicked in and we started identifying the critically injured people to shift them to hospital. At the end we performed as per the SOPs and successfully rescued which gave us a lot courage and satisfaction.

Within one year the emergency service realized the need of developing a specialist rescue operations (SEO) team as they were encountering incidents which required specialist training and equipment. To develop the SEO, the high performing individuals from the rescue teams were selected. They were trained and provided with the latest specialized equipment to perform their duties. Zain being a high performer was part of the SEO team from the start.

Their training was put to test when they were called to an incident where a labor had fallen into a 135 feet deep well. On reaching the incident location Zain realized that how dangerous



the rescue operation could be as the well was very deep and only a few feet wide. There was a good chance of dangerous gases in the well. The condition of the victim was also not known as he was not responding to any calls. Zain did not deter from the danger and started the operation as per his training. When he descended into the well he realized that the labor was buried under a lot of bricks at the bottom of the well. He started the operation by lifting the bricks and sending them out of the well with the

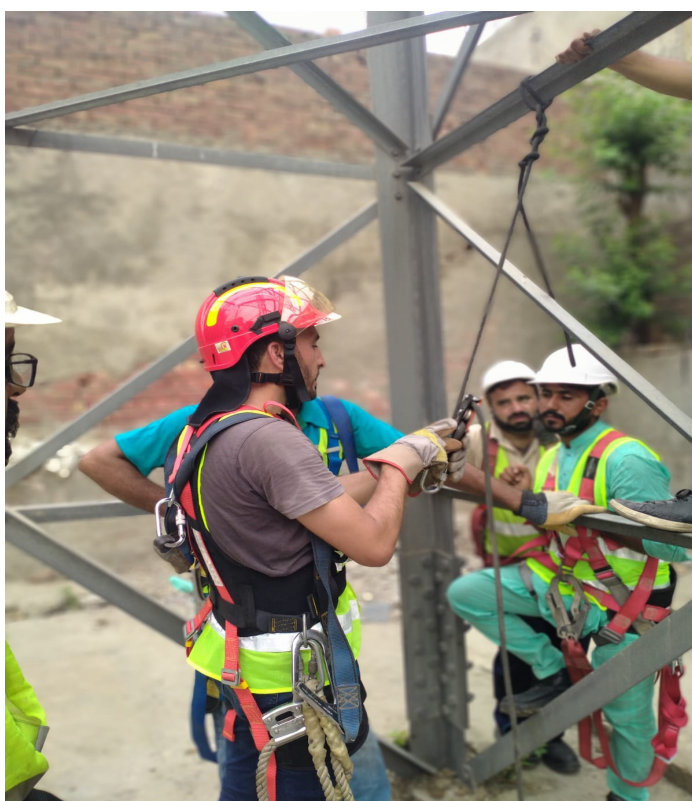
help of his team members. After 12 long hours they were able to retrieve the person from the well. Their efforts and professionalism was highly appreciated and they were able to successfully rescue the person.

Zain has been leading his SEO on other numerous missions including road accidents and falls with extreme and critical situations. The nature of the incident and injuries to the victims has never deterred or troubled him whether it is a case where children had iron bars pierced through their face or whether it is an accident where people are trapped in a damaged vehicle. He feels very satisfied and content with the service he has been providing and the precious lives that he has been able to save. Zain has a firm belief in himself and his training and he has always been able to do his best in saving the precious lives of the victims.

Another critical operation that he recalls was of two young boys who were travelling on a motorcycle when they hit a trolley from behind. The trolley was carrying iron bars which pierced through the kids' bodies from multiple locations. He was successfully able to rescue the boys by cutting the iron bars and not extracting them from the bodies to avoid over bleeding. Both the kids survived this accident and after their recovery they used to visit Zain and his team, which gave the rescue team a moral boost and sense of proud. It was this specialized training along with their professional attitude that enabled rescue teams to save many precious human lives.

According to Zain the training provided to him has played a big role in improving the survival rate of victims. Traditionally after any incident the people nearby would rush to perform the rescue however due to their lack of knowledge and understanding they tend to cause more harm than good by mishandling the victims. The advanced trainings provided for special emergency operations has been very helpful in performing successful rescue operations.

Zain has been awarded best rescuer of 2008 from all over Punjab. He has also won the Pakistan National Youth award in humanitarian services in 2008. Zain feels very proud of his work and he feels that it is an honor to serve the humanity and to preserve the human dignity.





# Personification of Selflessness

Volunteerism is a basic expression of human relationships. It is about people's need to participate in their societies and to feel that they matter to others. It is believed that the social relationships intrinsic to volunteer work are critical to individual and community wellbeing. And Balam Daas, 34-year-old Humanitarian Aid Worker (HAW) from village Sher Muhammad Khaskheli of UC Jam Nawaz Ali, district Sanghar, Sindh Province is an apt personification of this basic expression of human relationships. Serving humanity gives him inner-strength and a year of extensive work as HAW has made him believe that he is a responsible person of his community.

He terms people's prayers for him his greatest asset. He was instrumental in exemplary observance of social distancing protocols in his village amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Balam attended the three-day HAW training in October 2019 and was greatly inspired by his trainers Yaqoob Brohi and Iqbal Unhar. "Selflessness, preparedness, discipline, management, coping emergencies and disasters, ensuring safe rescue and relocation, are the basic concepts and subjects that I learnt in that training. And since then under the guidance of my village committee, I'm putting these concepts into practice," Balam began.

Being a relatively educated guy of his community, Balam also uses the digital platforms of social media to serve the humanity in whatever capacity he is able to. During the flashfloods 2020, he did a marvelous job by posting pictures of the homeless affectees in UC Nauabad and connected them to the local charity organizations and individuals. "Some of the affluent directly offered me funds to help the affectees but I thought it better to link them with the needy as I lack a large infrastructure to deliver," Balam confided.

Similarly, he was active energetically and thoughtfully during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. He conducted five awareness sessions in different villages and convinced the people to observe social distancing and other precautionary protocols. "In those sessions, I used data of the human lives lost in other countries to inform the community that how

dangerous a pandemic can be. I got around a hundred surgical masks from Malteser and distributed them all among the participants of my awareness sessions," Balam continued.

He is the real humanitarian Hero, salute to him.



**Balam Das**

# Sacrificing Everything to Save Lives. Fighting at the Front Line.

Not all heroes wear capes. There are people who have given their life to something bigger than themselves. They are just around us to help out even in the most extreme circumstances, ensure our safety when adversity hits, and voluntarily walk into the unknown to make this world a better place to live.



Such was the case of Mr. Amir Nasir. He worked at PRCS Regional Blood Donor Centre at NHQ in Islamabad and had been very active in arranging much-needed blood donations for thalassemia patients as well as those in urgent need amid coronavirus pandemic when the supply of blood had reduced almost to zero. He caught the virus in the line of duty, remained hospitalized for over a month but lost the battle. “I am desperate to join my duty back ... my life is important, but so are those who are in urgent need of blood,” were his words the moment he was temporarily put off oxygen support at the hospital. But, destiny had something else in store for him. He left for his final abode, leaving his kids crying for a loving father and his parents for an obedient and respectful son. Today, he is not among us but his services for humanity will continue to inspire and motivate many for long.

Amir died with his boots on, as even after running temperature and labored breathing, he was seen working like a Trojan arranging blood donation camps and motivating donors through his speeches to make beeline for donations, as the life of thousands of patients was hanging by a thread due to blood shortage in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak.

His motivational lectures – packing force and logic – would work wonders and those dreading the needle prick or avoiding donating blood for misplaced fear of contracting some infection would willingly line up to make donations.

Colleagues advised him against working so hard and to take care of his health, but he would always put his work ahead of his illness. It was as though he knew he had very little time. He would shrug off his colleagues’ concerns by saying “No big deal – it’s just a bad chest and slight temperature. I will get well soon but let me first deal with these urgent things,” For him, it was a nonissue, but his flirtation with the infection cut him off in the prime of life.

During his 12-year association with the RBDC as Office Assistant/Data Entry Operator, colleagues never saw his hands still or empty. They would see him rushing from one office to another with files tucked tightly under his sleeves, or feeding data (on blood units and its products) to his computer. He personified kindness, calmness, integrity, endurance, humility, and patience.

His colleagues are all full of praise for Amir and they remember him as an unforgettable part of their memories. Muhammad Atif Awan, motivator, said Amir was like brother to him, who treated his work as pure worship. Such was his spirit of volunteerism, selflessness and



altruism that he would volunteer himself for any task. During the October 8, 2005 devastating quake and Sabzi Mandi, Islamabad blast in April 9, 2014, he played an important role in arranging blood donation camps.

Similarly, during the December 16, 2014 terrorist attack on the Army Public School, Peshawar, Amir took 250 blood bags and handed them over to the authorities concerned. He worked beyond duty hours. He was amiable, sociable and a source of motivation for the colleagues. Mir Badshah, vaccinator, said Amir was a good human being and a thorough professional. He was kind-hearted, humble and God-fearing. He never saw Amir sitting idle and his professional approach goaded his colleagues to work with more force, vigor, and commitment.

It is heartening to note that in recognition of Amir Nisar's matchless services, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and Turkish Red Crescent Society have committed a handsome financial support to his family, which will help them live a decent, honorable life. Chairman PRCS Abrar ul Haq, TRC Head of Delegation (HoD) in Pakistan Ibrahim Carlos and I visited Amir's family and parents and informed them about the decision.

Amir Nisar is among scores of healthcare professionals (HCPs) who fell victim to the COVID-19 pandemic while on duty. Sacrificing their personal comfort, staying away from their loved ones and taking their lives in their own hands, these healthcare professionals worked almost round the clock performing the assigned tasks until the cold, icy claws of death took them away. HCPs like Amir and scores of others are an important and unforgettable part of the nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

We were sure to lose this battle had our HCPs not risen to the occasion. They are still out in the field fighting the pandemic whenever and wherever needed. We owe our success against the pandemic mainly to these HCPs and our government. People like Amir are the Real Life Heroes and surely deserve a big salute.



Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) with support from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is implementing the program 'Increased Locally Led Actions to Prepare for, Respond to and Recover from Disasters in selected high risk Countries of Asia' in 6 South and South-East Asian countries namely- Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Philippines and Myanmar.

The program utilizes a unique network approach by creating the Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP) - a multi-stakeholder regional partnership through the program. APP strives to improve inter-organizational coordination and dialogue between Governments, Local Humanitarian Organization networks and Private Sector networks for enhancing capacities through partnerships, knowledge resources, training and networking opportunities. The program's goal is to strengthen the emergency response capacities in these countries to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.





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