

A New Sense of Security for Earthquake Survivors in Pakistan

Shamim Bibi (see the photo, page 39), 33, lost her husband and daughter in the earthquake that hit Northern Pakistan on October 8, 2005. “When I went to school to check on my children, the school had collapsed. I managed to get two of my kids out alive from the rubble, but my daughter died. After that I went to check on my husband. He also died,” said Shamim Bibi.

Her home in Ghan Chatter, a village just outside Muzaffarabad, was left in ruins. Like thousands of other houses, it came crashing down with the first few jolts—in part because of poor construction with substandard material.

In the city of Muzaffarabad, more than 10,000 people died and about half of the city’s buildings were destroyed. The scale of the destruction and a difficult mountainous terrain made reconstruction daunting.

To help people rebuild, the government formed the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, and, with the Bank’s

financial and technical support, launched an ambitious \$1.5 billion owner-driven rural housing rebuilding program. The salient features of this program were technical assistance to homeowners and inspection of the reconstruction at various stages to ensure that seismic-resistant designs provided by the program were being followed.

Such house-to-house assistance and inspection entailed a mammoth logistical operation for reaching out to the grant recipients, who are spread over an area of 30,000 square kilometers of mountainous terrain. In three years, some 600,000 households received rapid disbursement of nearly \$1.3 billion in housing reconstruction grants.

Shamim Bibi has received grants totaling Rs 175,000 (about \$2,200) to rebuild her house. It is one of around 400,000 houses that have been completely rebuilt using earthquake-resistant building techniques. “We built our house according to the design given to us. This is a much better house than before. We are now happy and safe,” she said.