

Bam, Iran

Earthquake Recovery Program



Progress Report

October 2004

Overview:

On December 26, 2003, an earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale and centered near the ancient city of Bam, hit Iran. Though the number of casualties remains a point of debate, the government estimates at least 26,000 are dead and tens of thousands have been injured, along with approximately 90% of the city destroyed.

Having sustained a continued presence in Iran after responding to the 2002 Qazvin earthquake, Relief International was one of the first NGOs to respond to the victims of the earthquake in Bam with medical and food supplies. Focusing on sustainable solutions, Relief International has built upon a history of successful relief and rehabilitation programs internationally to provide profound impact interventions in order to better the lives of disaster victims.

Specifically, RI has been active in the camps for displaced in Bam, and in the two surrounding villages of Poshtrood and Esphikan, which were totally destroyed. Our activities include the provision of shelter, education, water and sanitation, internet, library and clinical facilities, as well as income generation and microcredit opportunities.

1) Shelter:

Providing an initial means of shelter and moving survivors' from these temporary shelters to their place of origin is one of the surest means of restoring livelihoods to families affected by disaster. In January 2004, RI started a permanent housing program in the two villages of Esphikan and Poshtrood. Separated from Bam by a river, these two adjacent villages are the largest in the surrounding area and sustained the highest level of damage in the immediate vicinity. All of the houses in Esphikan and Poshtrood were destroyed. According to updated estimates by local authorities, the number of shelter units needed in Poshtrood and Esphikan are reported to be 871 units, 189 less than the previously estimated 1,060.



In July 2004, RI's work in Esphikan and Poshtrood was hampered by increasing prices of metal and cement. In addition to the price increase, there was a higher level of demand than we originally estimated for larger shelter units that housed families of three and up. RI builds 60 square meter shelter units for families of 3 or more and 40 square meter units for families of 1-2. RI's goal of constructing shelters for every family in Esphikan and Poshtrood was threatened by this combination of increased prices and material needs.

However, generous donations from **British Petroleum** and the **Employees of BP** have now made it possible for all families in Esphikan and Poshtrood to receive shelter. We are most grateful to BP and its generous employees for this most timely gift. To date, 810 foundations have been filled and 470 metal frames have been erected.

On average, RI completes 10 to 15 units daily. RI has the capacity to complete 20 to 30 units daily, but there are shortages for basic construction materials such as concrete that impede day-to-day progress. Currently, RI's construction team consists of a staff of five fulltime employees overseeing the work of contractors and laborers. The team works full force from 7:00 in the morning to 9:00 in the evening.

2) Camp Based Social Services Facilities: Clinic, Water Sanitation, Library, School and Cultural Center

A) Bam: Wahdat and Sina Camps

Schools and Clinical Facilities

All 131 schools in Bam and the surrounding villages were destroyed or damaged beyond use. There were 8,200 students residing in Bam who were waiting to return to school and continue their education. In response to the needs of the children, RI has constructed a school in each of the camps.

In Sina camp, RI has constructed one school, one library, a cinema and an internet center. Further, to preserve and improve the health of the camps population, RI constructed a five-room clinic including a public restroom and washing facility. In cooperation and in coordination with UNICEF, Sina's school is fully-furnished. According RI's staff in Bam, the first day of school was full of happiness and excitement for the children.

Another new program has been recently implemented in August of 2004. RI began to run English classes taught by a local teacher. Currently, there are 26 students taking English classes three times a week.

RI has also constructed a five-classroom school in the Wahdat camp.

RI has also constructed a five-classroom school in the Wahdat camp and has provided clothing and food to over 200 vulnerable children since the initial relief phase of the earthquake.

Community Educational and Cultural Center

RI recently completed a Community Educational and Cultural Center in Sina camp and it is being fully utilized by the community. The complex consists of two large tents with concrete flooring and air-conditioning each with a capacity to hold 200 people. The first tent includes:



Children are happy to be back to school in newly furnished classrooms Sina Camp



Students are gathering outside of their class waiting for class to begin. Sina Camp

- a) A five-classroom school;
- b) A Internet/Computer center (10 computers with instructional classes and internet access); and
- c) A library that contains over 2,000 titles, which has been sponsored by the **Iranian Association of Boston**.

The Internet and Computer Center trains students in basic computer applications and of internet usage. The center operates in four shifts where the first three shifts last for about 2 hours each, and the last shift runs for an hour. The center is staffed by three local employees who operate the center from open to close. The first three shifts are reserved for training of students and the last hour serves more as entertainment where children can play computer games.

The library has been a huge success amongst children and adults. The library operates from 8:30am to 12:00 noon and from 2:00pm - 6:30pm. RI's ground staff reports that at any one time there are at least 35 people who are checking out books from the library. It is estimated that 70% of those using the library are children and 30% are adults. The library has received requests for more Iranian fiction and children's books. Recently, 200 new books have been added to the existing collection.



The library is always full – especially with children.

With assistance from local philanthropists from the city of Kerman, the center is also equipped with a cinema, which screens movies nightly. The cinema has become a very popular attraction. It provides specialized programming, catering to the interest of children as well as adults. A second usage of this hall has been for community meetings, where the community is able to hold gatherings and discussions. For example, currently the space is being used on a regular basis for meetings of Narcotics Anonymous. The facility also serves as a space where the national university entrance exams in Bam are administered. This has allowed students in Bam to continue their education and not fall behind the national university entrance examinations. Lastly, this center held a painting workshop for children in collaboration with Society for Protecting the Rights of Children, a national NGO led by Ms. Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Noble Laureate in Peace.



The cinema has been one of the most welcomed and utilized facilities.

The second tent serves as a Women's Center. RI has started women-specific programs such as microcredit loans to women and is working with a national NGO to train women in income generating activities that include sewing and tailoring.



Tailoring workshop held at the Cultural Center at Sina Camp.

The educational facilities and the clinic in these camps are extremely well received and in great in high demand. It has been reported that some of the women who participate in the activities live as far as two hours away from the center. Further, youth from the camps began to use the schools even before it was fully constructed. The library project shows much promise and is already very popular as well as having the potential to be replicated in the villages as well as in the camps.

B) Villages of Poshtrood and Esphikan

With assistance from the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**, RI established a new Education and Cultural Center in Poshtrood that also serves the village of Esphikan. The center is equipped with an Internet/Computer Center (with 10 computers and Internet access), one library with 2,500 titles, one cinema with daily shows, two office rooms and a night guard room.

Computer classes are held in three shifts, with a total of 76 students currently participating (47 females, 29 males). Although the computer project is a relatively new addition, there is growing demand for these classes and 23 people are currently on a waiting list for the class. As soon as RI identifies an additional local teacher, more computer classes can be held.

At the library, RI issues library cards to users who pay a small membership fee to ensure future sustainability of the library. The library is also a site for educational activities. This center is staffed by two local employees (one female, one male). The center is operational between 8:30 am to 11:30 and resume from 2:30pm until closing at 5:30pm.



Children's section of the library at Poshtrood and Esphikan villages.



Among the camp population, females are the most frequent users of the Internet centers.

Income Generation & Microcredit for Women

Over 7,000 families in Bam and the surrounding villages generate a large part of their income from the sale of cow milk. In fact, dairy production was so ample before the earthquake, that Bam was known as Iran's national source of milk products. Bam's climate facilitates an abundant growth of hay, which is produced eight times a year. The high production of hay provides ample support for the restocking of cows, many of which perished in the earthquake, leaving many families without the means to generate income.

In May 2004, RI completed a survey of income generation opportunities in association with local NGOs that identified particularly vulnerable families, their needs and the most feasible and

appropriate responses to help these families initiate long-term recovery. According to the survey results, RI learned two important facts: 1) women tend to the cows and 2) animal husbandry, milk production and farming are critical components to the restoration of livelihoods in Bam and the surrounding villages.

With this knowledge, RI began a microcredit program for women in the villages of operation in July 2004. RI worked with local businesses and established a microcredit fund for women, which provided women the means to own one cow or start a small business. As the program continues to develop, RI will also facilitate the formation of cooperatives so that the women can increase their buying power and eliminate the need to use a middle man.

In late October 2004, RI received a generous matching grant from Mr. Hamid Moghadam in the amount of \$100,000.00 for this program.

To date, 20 women have received loans through RI's microcredit program. The women are already earning a steady income. With the matching grant, the program is expected to increase to include 200 women by December of 2004. In anticipation of the increased interest and responsiveness from beneficiaries, RI has placed a team of microcredit experts in Bam to train local staff in the management of microcredit programs. Donations from individuals and other donors to this program will be matched on a 1-1 basis to assist more families.

Microcredit Project Examples:

In the village of Poshtrood, women who are participating in RI's microcredit program meet with RI representatives every Wednesday at 5:00 pm to discuss the needs of these women and what RI can do to help them re-establish their lives. The entire group chose the neediest women amongst themselves who received the first RI loans in the village. The following cases indicate provide a more in-depth look at the results of these weekly meetings in Poshtrood and the impact they are having on the community.

a) Microcredit for Livestock

RI purchased ten cows and provided ten women with a small loan that would allow them to eventually own the income-generating cow. As part of RI's philosophy to help victims regain a sense of independence, these women were involved in all stages of the process: selection of cows, getting back-up documents from the bank for the loan, and registration of cooperatives. There are two groups of five women who are members of the cooperative and each are responsible for one another's weekly paybacks and if one defaults on a payment, the other four are obligated to design a solution for payment otherwise RI can repossess the cows. All women have signed a detailed contract with four witnesses: two RI employees, one government representative and one from borrower's side.

Case 1:

Name: Zahra
Age: 23
Marital status: single
Dependents: 2 younger brothers
Loan Subject: Cow
Loan amount: \$709
Loan period: 20 months
Weekly Payback: US\$9.53



Case 2:

Name: Soghra
Age: 47
Marital Status: Widowed
Dependents: 9 children
Loan Subject: Cow
Loan amount: \$709
Loan period: 20 months
Weekly Payback: US\$8.58



Case 3:

Name: Zahra
Age: 26
Marital Status: Married (husband unemployed)
Dependents: 2 children
Loan Subject: Cow
Loan amount: \$686
Loan period: 20 months
Weekly Payback: US\$9.53



b) Store Ownership Loans

The RI microcredit team realized through its weekly meetings with program participants that cow ownership is not the only desired means of earning income. Some women asked for loans to start small grocery stores; in response, RI provided two women who demonstrated the most need with loans to start small stores in Poshtrood.

Case 1:

Name: Jamileh

Age: 31

Marital status: Married (husband unemployed)

Dependents: 3 children

Loan subject: Grocery store

Loan amount: \$686

Loan Period: 13 months

Weekly Payback: US\$12.10



Case 2:

Name: Mariam

Age: 34

Marital Status: widowed

Dependents: 3 children

Loan Subject: New freezer for her store

Loan amount: \$685

Loan Period: 13 months

Weekly Payback: US\$14.25



c) Bakery

RI is constructing a bakery with four traditional gas stoves in village of Poshtrood. There are eight women who are cooperatively applying for a loan from RI and who will manage the bakery. A profession baker with over ten years of experience has already been identified and the RI team will assist the women in developing efficient ways to sell their product not only in the local market, but in Kerman as well.



3) Other:

RI's extensive experience in emergencies around the globe has shown that a holistic understanding of a problem is the most effective means of achieving positive results. Thus, as part of our strategy in Bam, RI followed a multi-pronged approach that address economic needs, physical needs and emotional needs of the victims. Schools, libraries, internet centers, community centers, clinics, as well as microcredit loans for livelihoods are all examples of the various ways in which RI has engaged the community to help rebuild their own lives and perhaps even improve upon the lives that they once knew.

OFAC License

RI will continue its work in Bam through the duration of its US government OFAC license. The original license has been extended three times and is currently valid through December 2004. RI staff will finish construction of foundations and metal frames in Esphikan and Poshtrood by December 2004. The community has been incredibly receptive and supportive of RI's work, encouraging the growth and development of more programs particularly in education and micro-credit.

UN/NGOS:

Most NGOs and UN agencies have withdrawn from Bam at this point. A number of Iranian NGOs are active and providing quality focused and high impact programs. RI is working with several Iranian NGOs to strengthen local capacity and to meet the needs of widows and other especially vulnerable groups who suffered in the earthquake.

Almost \$2,490,000 has been raised for RI's programs in Bam. This support has been made possible by generous donations from:

- Thousands of individuals
- Foundations such as the *British Petroleum Foundation, Wells Fargo Foundation, the Flora Family foundation, the Hassenfeld Foundation, the Guzik Foundation, Terry & Jane Semel Charitable Foundation, Community Foundation Silicon Valley, California Community Foundation, Ralston Family Fund and the Clinton Family Foundation*
- Multiple Iranian-American community associations including the *Persian Cultural Society of San Diego Persian Cultural Club, the Iranian Association of Boston, the Unity Project, Persian Cultural Center/Iranian Foundation, NIAS Foundation, Persian Club of UC Santa Barbara, the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) and the Persian Center in Northern California*
- Corporate employee-donation programs including *British Petroleum, Cisco, Intel, Edison, Hughes Systems, Synopsis, Magma Design Automation and Countrywide*
- Iranian-American media primarily *IRAN-TV [Shabkhiz] Network (Reseda, CA)*
- Corporate donations such as the *Amini Innovation Corporation and Intel*
- RI's Board of Directors and staff
- A generous matching grant for microcredit from Hamid Moghadam
- A generous matching grant from Pam and Pierre Omidyar.

RELIEF INTERNATIONAL EXPRESSES DEEP GRATITUDE TO ALL THE DONORS FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP AND GENEROSITY IN MAKING A POSITIVE, LASTING IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF BAM