

## Case Studies – Stories Interns & Volunteers

A number of interns and volunteers have already worked at ERRA since its inception. Their contribution has provided valuable support to the planning process and highlighted the benefits they can contribute to the ERRA, its partners and themselves.

### Ali Fatch (Pakistan)

## Building Back Better: my time as an Intern at ERRA

Working at ERRA, for me, was an enriching experience. As an intern, you are exposed to a conducive, fast-paced and professional work environment. Frankly, I did not expect that working with ERRA would be as demanding as it was – the government is usually portrayed as apathetic – and so I was surprised that the employees were on-the-go 24/7.



Assigned to the focal point for all the local/ International NGOs, Donor organizations and countries - Donors & Sponsors Coordination Cell - I was given my first job: to summarize and evaluate a report by ERRA's Environment Sector on the dangers posed by the Hattian Bala lake, formed in wake of the 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 earthquake. My boss handed me a thousand-page report, expecting that it would keep me occupied for the next two weeks. I was done with the report in two days. I guess ERRA's efficiency rubbed off on me a little.

My bosses were jolly and good-humoured and they livened up what was an otherwise slightly serious, no-nonsense office. As I watched them liaise with NGO representatives and UN employees on a daily basis, I learnt how carefully, tactfully and diplomatically the government has to deal with the civil society. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and No Objection Certificates (NOC) were being signed left and right (at first, I did not even know what those were!). Bridges were being built between the people by those who had the power to bring change into the lives of the earthquake-affected victims. At ERRA, cooperation and consensus-building is key.

Over the course of my three-month-long internship, I collaborated with the Media Cell to produce a one-minute commercial which featured the apocalyptic aftermath of the disaster that brought ERRA into being and glimpses of ERRA's work bearing fruition.

I became the bane of my boss' existence because every morning I'd start begging her to let me tag along on one of the frequent field trips that ERRA officers make to the earthquake-affected regions. Ultimately, she caved in, and I found myself aboard a helicopter flying through the mountains of Kashmir accompanying senior ERRA officers and representatives of a donor from Saudi Arabia, to inspect progress on the facilities they were funding and to attend meetings. The delegation visited a temporary Saudi-funded hospital in Mansehra and also stopped at Muzaffarabad to gauge the progress of welfare and rebuilding efforts. Apart from a few derelict, cracked buildings, Muzaffarabad looked so normal that I was a bit taken aback. Frankly speaking, I had expected the city to be in shambles. But instead, the city was spotted with fabricated houses and schools.

It was fulfilling to see that for most of the earthquake victims, life is coming back, or as close as it can to, normal. This field visit had a heartening effect on me: seeing the little children from the devastated areas playing, and enjoying such a simple pleasure as enthusiastically chasing after the helicopter's shadow, made me realize how important it is, and the responsibility of the privileged – all of us – to ensure that they be given the amenities and opportunities for a better life.

So, compared to briefing new interns, editing budget reports and updating data files, attending a conference especially held for all ERRA interns and making a speech at that conference about my experience so far as an Intern, writing an article on my trip that got published in a newspaper and faxing, emailing, attending the endless telephone calls and entertaining NGO representations, I'd say the defining moment of the internship (the field visit) was to see that there are people who care about their Pakistani family, that we can join hands to offer the less-privileged a leg-up in their time of need, that insurmountable obstacles can be overcome, and that the victims of the 8<sup>th</sup> October earthquake – whose lives were so rocked by the disaster – have a chance at a second life of sorts. ERRA, even now – almost three years after the earthquake struck - is helping to *Build Back Better*.

**Ali Faateh Khwaja**

**Head Intern**

**May – August 2007**

**Islamabad , Pakistan**

**Khaula Waqar (Pakistan)**

## **Building Back Better: my time as an Intern at ERRA**

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**T**he time I spent with ERRA as an internee was truly an inspiring period for me, which changed my outlook and overall perspective on life in itself. After the first year examinations of my intermediate studies, I could find some free time and thought that ERRA would be the perfect place to offer me an exciting, stimulating and moving experience - ERRA was all this and much more.



The aim of creating Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) is to Build Back Better, improved services with the use of seismic resistant materials/ designs with better techniques and community participation to ensure improved and long term sustainability of the rehabilitated facilities. My main interaction was with the media wing. Under the able guidance and of my bosses, my fellow interns and I connected with the Health sector, the Donors and Sponsors Coordination Cell – D&SCC, the Social Protection sector, Water and Sanitation, M.I.S, Urban Development sector and Housing complaints.. Every individual of ERRA was wonderful and their understanding and hospitality was overwhelming and made it an unforgettable experience for me.

The most interaction I had was with the health sector where I met earthquake victims like Rubina, 21, from Chikar who had 10 fractures, Noreen, 17, from Julgari village near Bagh, and Samina, 18, who was paralyzed after the earthquake hit. Meeting these individuals was a truly moving experience for me which I'll never forget. We saw how dedicatedly ERRA worked to help these mentally and physically challenged people. We also spent two weeks in NIHD (National Institute of Handicapped) under the direction of Dr. Jahanzeb and other doctors. I met many young women going through the most traumatic experiences of their lives but Anoosha, a 6 year old girl, captured my attention the most. She was from a place known as Musa Samal kot where she was playing at the time of the earthquake. Though she was severely injured and was paralyzed below the waist her hope and wonderful outlook for life inspired me. She was an engaging and endearing child who looked up to her doctors and you could tell how grateful she was as she expressed that her wish was to become a doctor too and treat people like she was being treated by the doctors.

My fellow interns and I made a report on Anoosha and were able to upload it onto ERRA's website where we requested the UN and other international organizations and foreign doctors to help us

with Anoosha. The report was titled "They need your help today, tomorrow maybe too late" which is true because while dealing with someone as fragile as Anoosha, every second counts.

ERRA is doing an amazing job and have well planned goals and objectives for the rehabilitation of the earthquake victims. We met the Chief of Staff Brig Waqar Iqbal Raja who told us about the various sectors and working of ERRA. We also met the Chairman Mr. Altaf M. Saleem who told us more about ERRA and how it goes beyond rehabilitation and helping people rebuild their lives. The program is perfectly balanced to let us gain an understanding and respect for the culture and community where we are working, letting us explore on our own, and giving us the opportunity to feel like we're making a difference. Every day brought more smiles and taught me so much about myself as well as the children. Interacting with the staff was a great experience as well and I'll never forget what I learned there.

**Khaula Waqar**

**Intern**

**May – August 2007**

**Islamabad , Pakistan**

## Aaron Mundy (Australia)

### Building Back Better: my time as a Volunteer at ERRA

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**I**n year 2006 I decided to take a break from studies before starting university so that I could travel and see some of the world. But I wanted to do something more than sightseeing. I wanted to help people - to contribute in whatever way I could to a worthy and credible organization that was assisting disadvantaged communities in the developing world. ERRA provided such an opportunity so I decided to go to Pakistan.



I spent two months in Islamabad as a volunteer with ERRA. My time there coincided with the one year anniversary of the earthquake. It was an interesting time for ERRA and for the reconstruction effort in general. It was a transitional period whereby the focus of the organization had shifted from recovery to reconstruction – the rebuilding of physical infrastructure and private housing, and the rehabilitation of affected communities. It is in this context that I worked with ERRA staff to create ERRA's first annual report and to establish a Gender Equality Technical Assistance Team within the Authority.

The aim of the Annual Report Project was to produce a document that recorded the progress of the organization over its first year of operation. This was intended to provide ERRA with a benchmark against which future progress could be measured. It was also intended to provide external users with information regarding the workings of ERRA and the reconstruction and rehabilitation effort in general. The end product fulfilled these two broad functions. It is a valuable historic document which is a record of the organization's progress that it has achieved and the processes and strategies employed to achieve this progress. It also provides partner organizations with a kind of practical guide to the organization's structure, as well as highlights the broad policies that dictate the general direction of the recovery effort.

As the focus shifted from recovery to the construction and the long-term rehabilitation of affected communities, the need for the organization to take into account gender issues in its planning and implementation was becoming increasingly obvious. In response to this need, the Canadian International Development Authority (CIDA) supported the reconstruction and rehabilitation work by funding a small specialist team to assist ERRA to add a "Gender Dimension" to all of its operations. The Gender Equality Technical Assistance Team was tasked with developing policies and programs to ensure that the needs of *both* men and women are taken into account thereby increasing the likelihood that the benefits of reconstruction and rehabilitation flow to both men and women equally. Assisting the team in the establishment of this important work provided interesting insights into the complex gender-specific impacts of disasters.

Living in Islamabad was a great experience and I made many friends amongst colleagues and the broader Pakistani community. I was also able to visit some of the earthquake-affected areas such as Balakot and travel to other parts of the North West Frontier Province. The beauty of the country and the incredible hospitality of the local people remain memorable.

As is customary with volunteering, I met all my own costs of participation - my travel to Pakistan and my living expenses while I was there. To raise funds I worked part-time in my holidays. I invested a lot of time and effort into this work and although I didn't expect or receive any tangible

benefit in return, the experience of volunteering for ERRA was extremely rewarding. I knew that I had contributed in a meaningful way and that the people who were disadvantaged by the earthquake had benefited. On a far more personal level, I also learnt a lot from my two months spent at ERRA. The skills I developed there are not the kind of skills that can be learnt in a classroom. Nevertheless, they are invaluable. In fact, I found it to be such a positive experience that I returned to ERRA as a volunteer in January of 2008.

**Aaron Mundy**  
**Volunteer**  
**Melbourne, Australia**

### Ned Trumble (Australia)

## Building Back Better: my time as a Volunteer at ERRA

I found myself working with ERRA halfway through my university summer holidays in January, 2008. I was travelling with a friend, Aaron, who had spent 2 months in Islamabad working for ERRA in 2006, in China before we decided to head to Pakistan.



It was not without a certain degree of apprehensions with which I entered the country, having never been there and knowing nothing of the culture or people. These apprehensions were, thankfully, quickly appeased by the genuinely friendly nature of Pakistani people right across the social strata. Never had I been so overwhelmed by such amicable and welcoming hospitality. Although it is said that Islamabad is 20 minutes from Pakistan and 20 minutes Rawalpindi. I still feel that I got a taste, however slight, of Pakistani culture and customs.

Fortunately Aaron and I were given the opportunity to do some work with ERRA developing and working on a concept paper of volunteer/internship program. Therein I was exposed to the 2005 Earthquake that so brutally devastated northern parts of Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, this was a natural disaster which being so isolated from, I was almost entirely ignorant of. It was not until I arrived at ERRA that I began to grasp just how far reaching the effects of the earthquake were and how long lasting these effects will be. Apart from the immediate damage inflicted by the earthquake in terms of loss of human life, and destruction of hundreds of thousands of homes / houses, property and infrastructure, there is now a huge population including elderly who have lost their families, women-headed households, orphans, and permanently disabled victims left vulnerable resulting in a long and complex list of social, economic, and infra-structural problems for ERRA to deal with. It is these long lasting effects and problems that really do make it imperative that ERRA does Build Back Better.

During the time that we were working in ERRA we identified areas where ERRA could need assistance and found that almost all of the key Programme sectors could use volunteers of one discipline or another. We then established from which tertiary disciplines and occupations volunteers could be most useful to the various Programme sectors. Once this had been done, in collaboration with Programme sector heads, we established the concept and structure for the program. Although we have now finished our in-country assignment and have returned to university in Australia, we still intend to contribute to the work through online volunteering from home.

Working at ERRA was a truly rewarding experience, and although the effects of the work we did in our short time there may have been slight in the overall reconstruction and rehabilitation program, they are still far reaching and will hopefully make an impact on those who have been affected by the earthquake. Seeing such commitment and dedication in the staff of ERRA and the seemingly insurmountable challenge that they face, I feel proud that, perhaps, my small contribution may help ease the load on ERRA in the work they do for the people of the earthquake affected areas of North West Frontier Province and Kashmir. Having actually been fortunate enough to visit Kashmir and witness the damage first hand, and comparing it with the photos of the earthquake's effects in its immediate wake in 2005 it is easy to see just how much ERRA has achieved to date, but, at the same time, how much more work is yet to be done.

**Ned Trumble**  
**Volunteer**  
**Melbourne, Australia**

Sana Zulfiqar (Pakistan)

## Building Back Better: my time as a Volunteer at ERRA

**“The honour, safety and welfare of your country come first always and every time. The safety, comfort and welfare of the men you command come next. Your own ease, safety and comfort come last always and every time.”(These fine words are said by Quaid-e-Azam).**



A massive earthquake on October 8, 2005 was the worst tragedy in the history of Pakistan. It posed a number of serious challenges to both the government and the people of Pakistan; it also brought out the best in them. Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) undertook to convert this adversity into an opportunity for the effected people and for the whole nation. ERRA’s commitment to “Build Back Better” is not confined to brick and mortar alone; it extends to including positive change in the way the society operates.

Inspite of being a third world country ERRA has gone through the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in such a short time period which is a great achievement as such a quick response and development process has not been ensured by the developed nations of the world as America, facing Katrina and South East Asia facing Tsunami. Recently China has asked for ongoing planning and strategies designed and followed by ERRA.

We were unaware of the outstanding work of ERRA and its partner organizations. But thanks to ERRA’s Intern-Volunteer program that provided us an opportunity to work with them and became aware of their services laid for the benefit of affectees.

Working at ERRA changed my perspective on life in itself. It is a unique organization where we find an opportunity to work with Government Bureaucracy, The Army, The Development World, International Financial Institutions, United Nations, International Agencies, INGO’s, Local INGO, s, Line Departments of the District Government and Civil Society. We were exposed to an environment where we developed a understanding of working with national and international organizations. We experienced the official as well as the fieldwork. We were asked to choose a program of our own interest as ERRA is implementing a comprehensive reconstruction and rehabilitation programme covering twelve major sectors\_ Housing, Education, Health, Social Protection, Livelihood, Governance, Power Telecommunication, Water and Sanitation, Roads/Transportation, Environment and Industry & Tourism.

I selected “Media Wing” which is divided into 7 sections. Among them my main interaction was with “Advertising and Media Campaign” section. Under the supervision of my bosses, I had learned how to run a campaign, how to prepare and give an Ad. Our supervisor also taught us about documentary making. We were also introduced with “Media Scan” section and the operation of “Call Center”.

Media section has created awareness among the general public about the development going on and portraying the positive image of donors and sponsors in extending support and providing relief to the affectees.

Coordination cell is another section where I learned how to coordinate the internal external work activities of the respective wings. I have also learned the management of different events.

ERRA also provided us a chance to visit National Engineering Services of Pakistan (NESPAK), where we came to know about the planning and strategies of “New Balakot City”. Which was very inspiring for us?

We are fortunate to visit AJK/NWFP and witness the reconstruction and rehabilitation work and compare it with photos of the earthquakes effects in 2005. It is easy to see how much ERRA has achieved but at the same time, how much work is yet to be done. ERRA gave us an opportunity to explore on our own by taking us on a field trip. Schools, colleges, universities and public health sectors build are well equipped then before. For me the field visit was the defining moment for ERRA's Intern-Volunteer program. By visiting those places I realized that ERRA is doing an amazing job and have well planed goals and objectives for the rehabilitation of earthquake victims. All it needs a continued sport from national and international organizations as well as from Pakistani nation. So that they may help in bringing back the life of earthquake victims to normal life.

Working as a Volunteer under ERRA Intern Volunteer Program provides us an opportunity to contribute our skills in one of the largest and most important development program, which has an impact on the lives of millions of people.

I feel ERRA is still facing many challenges like

- Land and financial resources
- Availability of managers, engineers, skilled and unskilled labour
- Enhancing consultant capacity
- Capacity and availability of constructors to undertake projects
- Availability of construction material on affordable prices
- Institutional/procedural challenges
- Availability of teachers and doctors

Interaction with the staff was a great experience and I will never forget what I learned here I would like to continue as an online volunteer and could recommend others to follow this path when they find any such opportunity and be the ambassador of ERRA. As we know:

Everyone can make a difference.

### Saarim (Pakistan)

## Building Back Better: my time as an Intern at ERRA

8<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Our nation was rocked by one of the worst natural disasters in its history. The entire nation was in shock. The affectees were in dire need of aid and rehabilitation. The need of the hour was immediate relief and rescue work. Our nation responded magnificently at this crucial hour and everyone from Pakistan and abroad turned out to help our brothers and sisters who had been affected by this unfortunate calamity.

However, what was soon realized was that a coordination and supervisory body was essential to ensure the smooth operation and organization of all rescue and relief efforts. Keeping this in mind, the government took the initiative and hence, ERRA – the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority – was created.

I first heard of ERRA back in October 2005 and I remember thinking that this nascent organization faced a very daunting task in the relief and reconstruction of the earthquake affected areas. They were faced by difficult terrain, fast approaching winter, and a dearth of the necessary equipment to deal with a disaster of such a tremendous magnitude. Despite all these hindrances, ERRA set about the task of providing relief to the disaster-stricken areas with determination and persistence.



Almost three years on, ERRA's success is a monument to itself. ERRA, with the assistance of the Pakistan Army, has organized and carried out one of the largest and speediest relief and reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen. It has coordinated all rescue operations from domestic and international agencies and effectively advocated the needs and rights of the earthquake affected people. It has reconstructed major facilities like the road and telecommunications network. Water and electricity provision is also one of the key priorities of ERRA. Many facilities were constructed from the ground up in an effort to better the lives of these grief-stricken people.

The most important thing which inspired me to join ERRA was the long-term planning which ERRA has undertaken. It is usually seen around the world that most relief efforts focus around immediate assistance, aid and reconstruction: the word rehabilitation is seldom used. ERRA has not only taken the short-term strategies and targets into account, but had also thought and planned out its long-term goals for rehabilitating the earthquake affected people.

Never was this more apparent to me than when I joined ERRA. ERRA's various sectors are a testimony to ERRA's commitment to pursue its long-term strategy and to provide the earthquake affectees with a new and hopeful life. ERRA is committed to helping these people in the long run by providing them with livelihood, physical and mental therapy, and freedom in their own land. Examples of ERRA's dedication to this cause include the construction of the New Balakot City – a purpose built model city constructed with the cooperation of NESPAK; and the National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (NIRM) – a hospital which caters to the requirements of the earthquake affected people.

My stay in ERRA has helped me to gain an insight into the workings of this assiduous organization and has also helped to clear away any misconceptions that I had regarding ERRA. It has cemented my belief in the fact that adversity can be converted into opportunity.