

# Creating Opportunities through Skills Training

*Vocational training centers helps increase income opportunities for vulnerable women in Muzaffarabad*

Upper plate, Muzaffarabad, Pakistan Administered State of Kashmir (PAK) – August 2009, 15 years old Uzma is one of the ten students learning stitching and tailoring at the Dar-ul-Falah – a training centre for widows and orphans.

The eldest in five sisters, Uzma was only 11 when she lost her father in the devastating 2005 earthquake. Since then her mother has worked as domestic help to make ends meet for her family. “It was never enough,” she says, “often we had to rely on financial help from our relatives”. Uzma left her studies to enroll in the six month long training course at the Dar-ul-Falah, because it offered a chance to learn a skill, and a monthly stipend. Now in the final stages of the course, a smiling Uzma proudly reveals she has been able to contribute to her household income. “I can now earn up to Rs.1500 to 2000 every month by stitching clothes in my neighborhood,” she says. She is positive the amount will increase once she devotes more time to work after completion of her course.



Dar-ul-Falah upper plate, Muzaffarabad- Uzma stitches a shirt using an electronic sewing machine during class.

Inspecting work of her students, Nusrat Shaheen is happy to express that the course has helped young girls and widows in making a decent living. A teacher of stitching, embroidery and hand knitting at the Dar-ul-Falah since the last 12 years, Nusrat recalls the devastating impact of the earthquake on the area and the institute, “Nearly every student we have, lost family members in the earthquake.” Most of the machinery and equipment at the Dar-ul-Falah was also damaged or destroyed. “We lost almost all of our machines in the earthquake; thankfully UNESCO helped us in recovering and provided us with funds and equipment for students to learn on.”

Recognizing the significance of contextualized technical and vocational training for the vulnerable youth and adults in the earthquake affected areas, UNESCO’s Earthquake Response Programme, supported by DFID and Government of Japan, reactivated and strengthened 18 existing government Technical and vocational education training institutes with provision of equipment, furniture and training materials. The project supported establishment of 10 new community based training centers under Directorate of Social Welfare and Women Development (DSWWD) and Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority in PAK, and constructed seismic resistant permanent training building for two Social Welfare Ladies Industrial Schools (SWLIS) in Bagh and Hajira.

Starting in November 2005, a total of 240 women were trained in tailoring, embroidery and beadwork by December 2008. An estimated 4000 men and women will benefit from the project investments made in the TVET institutions in PAK and North West Frontier Province in the next 10 years.