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PREAMBLE

The floods of August 2010 proved to be disastrous in the impact they had on the lives of the rural communities. Amongst those who had to suffer tremendous hardships, persons with disabilities (PWDs) were, perhaps, hit the hardest. With extremely limited access to relief and rehabilitation support, PWDs are amongst the most vulnerable groups in the post-flood scenario. For this reason, CHIP conducted a damage assessment exercise in District Bhakkar as a preliminary to provide support and assistance to these PWDs.

These case studies have been written as part of the project on Promoting Equity and Rehabilitation in District Bhakkar and seek to provide a snapshot into the struggles and successes of ten PWDs. As will be seen below, they come from different ages and genders across various villages in the district. But the problems they face are very similar: their inability to meet their own basic needs, social ostracism and a growing sense of despair and hopelessness. And it is this hopelessness, low self-esteem and projection of low self-worth that proves to be the biggest obstacle to recovery.

For this very reason, the rehabilitation programme for each PWD in this booklet was three-pronged. The first, and most obvious, stem was the provision of medical support to ease the pain and allow PWDs to physically overcome their disability. But it was equally important to provide the emotional support and counseling that would play a key role in their social rehabilitation as they step into a society they had been either deliberately shielded from or forcefully shunned from. Therefore, the second and third branches of the rehabilitation programme comprised motivational sessions with PWDs to boost self-confidence and family counseling sessions to ensure they receive the support they need from their loved ones.

Each of these ten case studies is a reminder that where one door closes, another one opens. Each case study is a real-life illustration of how these PWDs found their light at the end of the tunnel. While they may still have a long way to go and there may still be a lot more hardships left for them to face, they have found their light and at least another reason to hope again.

Hope, like the gleaming taper’s light,
Adorns and cheers our way;
And still as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray

-The Captivity: An Oratorio

It is amazing how eternal the notion of ‘light’ as a symbol of hope is. The words of Oliver Goldsmith, written in 1764, are a perfect encapsulation of finding that light at the end of a tunnel full of darkness, despair and misery. It is not the brainchild of an overly optimistic mindset but a representation of the faith that the human race places in the silver lining to every gray cloud it encounters. It is an acceptance of the reality that life will never pan out as planned and there will always be ups and downs. But at the same time, it is an acceptance of another reality, a reality even more crucial to survival. It is an acceptance of the reality that the darkest hour is just before dawn.
FLOWING WITH LIFE

Some once said that change is the only constant in our world and everything and everyone is in a constant state of change. Who could have understood that better than Ahmed? Like all the boys his age, Ahmed had loved playing outdoors in the field. A healthy five year old, his eyes shining with vitality, Ahmed would run about in the courtyard all day long playing on his own. Unpredictable and unforeseen, the change in his life came as a massive tide sweeping his childhood away within the blink of an eye as he fell ill to intensive typhoid fever. Lack of medical facilities and poor treatment meant his conditions worsened day by day. Doctors and faith-healers, one after the other, but his legs did not respond to the treatment ultimately resulting in a permanent disability.

As if losing the ability to walk was not enough, Ahmed somehow found himself ostracised from the rest of society. The friends he had known, his playmates, they all seemed to vanish from his life. The differences between them seemed to become too great and Ahmed was no longer capable of overcoming that vast gulf. His behaviour changed and so did his attitude. The young boy in him had died. He seemed aged with the burden he carried on his shoulders – the burden of being looked down upon by everyone that he had known. While other children his age were going to school, Ahmed was locked up in his room isolated and lonely. It seemed like a set of dominos, one falling after the other: the disability, no school, no vocational training.

His life changed again with a small knock on the door. The man said that he wanted to see me; for the first time in years I felt a surge of positivity. The man introduced himself as a community mobiliser from CHIP and asked Ahmed to go over his life history. Over the next few months after a medical assessment, Ahmed was given a walking stick and a walker to increase his mobility. He also participated in constant capacity building sessions, taught various effective exercises and physiotherapy and encouraged to engage in more social activities and events in order to overcome my disability. The tide which had swept him away more than fifty years ago had finally washed him ashore; he realised that the darkest hour in his life had just been before dawn.

Every morning a silhouette against the rising sun could be seen limping his way on the road to a small room, a room had become the main source of livelihood for him and his family. And, perhaps, this was CHIP’s greatest contribution in his life - a grocery store set up by CHIP to help him gain financial independence and regain his lost self-esteem. His family had been very supportive of him throughout some of the toughest years of his life but he could feel their happiness reverberate as they saw him working hard to make his business a success. His disability had wasted his childhood and youth but he longed to see a successful shop in the remaining years of his life; he aspired to make his small enterprise better and improve his business even more.

Every evening on his way back from the store, when the twinkling lights would come on in the dark, he would look back at his life and ponder. He regretted not having gone to school and resolved to himself that he would never let any of his four children suffer the same fate. As he made his way to the CBO meeting he thought of the difficulties he faced because of his disability, the embarrassment and the shame; he thought of how wrong that was and how no one should be put through it. And he made another promise to himself: to work as hard as can to give a voice to others like him so they do not suffer the way he did.
**EARLY BEGINNINGS**

Tanveer stared out of the window into the open field next to his house. His playmates, the friends he had known from the few years of education he had had, ran about playing *chor sipahi* as jovial and as oblivious to the world around them as they could be. He thought of where he would hide if he was playing with them too; perhaps, behind the fence on the other side of the field. No! The best place would be that leafy acacia tree in the middle of the field; he would be out of view of his opponents and the tree would provide shade on this hot summer day. Yes, that would be perfect. They would never find him there. If only he could walk, let alone run.

He was fourteen years old but felt much older. Life had forced him to grow up much sooner than the other children around him. He wondered what childhood felt like, not having a care in the world and where the biggest problem was losing a game of ludo. Tanveer had been born with deformed feet which although were curable, were not treated at the correct stage and unfortunately his disability became a permanent reality. He was happy for his sister but his own flaws seemed to come to light every time he saw her and was forced to think of how different his life could have been. She was also born with the same deformity but she received the correct treatment at the right time. He tried to console himself, tried to convince himself that this was fate but on days such as this he was unable to hide his sadness.

CHIP identified Tanveer during a damage assessment exercise in his village. He was in a state of desperation at the time; he felt frustrated at his incapacities and all the missed opportunities. He had hardly been able to gain any formal education having attended school only till the first grade after which he was forced to leave due to his parent's poor financial position and illiteracy. He found a source of encouragement in the community mobilisers. He attended several capacity building sessions which helped in boosting his morale and improving his self-confidence. CHIP also helped him to set up a small enterprise, a shoe shop, which he is now running successfully earning PKR 6,000 a month. The shop has proved to be an alternative source of income for the family.

Tanveer moved away from the window and left his house, making his way to the shop. He had so much on his mind: two orders were pending from the shop and he was already running late. The shop should have opened fifteen minutes ago. On his way, he crossed two young boys and wondered if they ever thought about the things he was worried about now. Probably not; they were too young anyways. Throughout his life, he had wondered whether his deformed legs or his family’s poverty were the real cause of his disability. But neither of the two mattered now. They had taught him one of life’s most valuable lessons: the importance of working hard. And he was going to work as hard as he possibly could to turn his humble shop into a much larger enterprise.

He reached the shop and unlocked the door. He entered the room and breathed in the strong yet fresh smell of polish and leather. He liked being here; it was a living reminder of his accomplishments, a reminder of how he was not useless. He had felt the change in his parent’s attitudes ever since as well. The shop had been a welcome support towards the family’s meager resources. He took his seat at the till with confidence as he thought about where he should start the day from.

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1 Chor sipahi: local version of the childhood game ‘cops and robbers’.
LET THE LIGHTS GUIDE YOU HOME

Every morning at the break of dawn, his mother would come and wake him up for school. Like every other twelve year old, he would sit up in his bed, rub his eyes in a fruitless effort to shake the sleep away and when he failed to do so, lie back down and ask for five more minutes of precious sleep. Every afternoon, he would make his way happily back home from school. After lunch, he would sit down and complete all his homework as responsibly as he could before going out to play with the rest of his friends. This was just a snapshot of Amir’s usual day, a seemingly normal routine for a seemingly normal school-going child. But this was just an incomplete story: Amir had been unable to walk since birth.

Medical treatment for his physical disability came with a heavy bill. His parents tried to obtain every possible kind of help they could afford, but his legs did not respond to the treatment. He was overly dependent on his mother to move from one place to another and even to meet his basic needs. But this was not the only price Amir had to pay for his disability – much like the other persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Baith Bogha North, Amir also found himself shunned from the rest of society. His physical incapacities were automatically translated into a form of social crippling. He could neither go to school with the rest of the children nor play with them in the evenings and his overwhelming sense of loneliness was only aggravated by his decision to confine himself at home completely.

CHIP identified Amir during the damage assessment exercise conducted after the floods of 2010. He was medically assessed, given a wheel chair to enhance his mobility and made to do physiotherapy exercises to restore functionality in the weaker parts of his body. Shy and disillusioned with life, it took several visits from community mobilisers and many motivational and capacity building sessions for Amir to start showing some signs of progress. With the passage of time, his outlook on life improved tremendously, the confidence that was lacking in his interactions now exuded in the way he talked. It was, as if, he had lost his way but with the help that he had received, he had found the lights and they were guiding him home, he had found a purpose and he was struggling towards it.

“Ma, I don’t want to go to school. What if the other children laugh at me? What if they ask me something that I don’t know?” he asked anxiously, looking for an excuse to convince his mother from sending him to school. His mother had smiled at him lovingly. But Amir had come a long way from where he had started off. He was no longer the timid boy who was so shy of stepping back into the world he had stayed away from all these years that did not want to go to school. He had morphed himself into the vibrant student who won the praise of all his teachers. He had found the will to study for the sake of his parents. It was his way of thanking them for showering him with love and supporting him at a time when the world had turned its back on him.

Every morning, without fail, Amir’s father would wait for him to get dressed and have his breakfast so he could drop him to school before going off to work himself. All the other children who had to walk to school on their own eyed him with envy. It was in that moment that Amir realized how lucky he was. He may have not had a perfect childhood, he may have a life full of struggles in front of him but he had been blessed by God in other ways and his parents were one of them. He aspired to study well and when he was old enough, to start his own business and support his parents one day like they had supported him.
$2 \times 1 = 2$
$2 \times 2 = 4$
$2 \times 3 = 6$
$2 \times 4 = 8$
$2 \times 5 = 10$
$2 \times 6 = 12$
$2 \times 7 = 14$
$2 \times 8 = 16$
$2 \times 9 = 18$
$2 \times 10 = 20$
OF DAMNING DOGMAS AND SOCIAL STIGMAS

His wife looked at him reluctantly as the midwife handed him the newborn and chirped, “Congratulations Ghulam Sahab, you have a daughter!” He smiled tightly and nodded. When the midwife left, he handed the young one back to his wife and left the room without a word, slamming the door behind him. Her heart sank.

The stigma associated with the birth of a girl is one that runs deeps within the minds of the illiterate. As unbelievable as it may sound, there are still people in this world that are humiliated by the birth of a daughter. Aqeela was born in such a society where even her own father saw her as a burden on the pocket and a wasted opportunity for him to have a son. Her mother on the other hand was a constant companion, a friend and a carer but she too was helpless in the face of a society so steeped in dogmas. The story did not end here – the six-year-old had another burden to bear: the shame of being physically disabled in both legs by birth. It set her apart from the other children and from the society’s point of view their differences were far too great for her to mingle with the rest of the girls her age.

At times, her mother would stand in the doorway and admire her beautiful daughter while she slept. She would wish that there was more she could do help her daughter walk, to stand on her own two feet and lead a normal life. She would think of all the visits she had made to the doctors and all those times that she had returned home disappointed and frustrated at hearing the same thing over and over again, that there was nothing more they could do for their daughter. She wished she had the money to provide her daughter with the advanced medical treatment that would cure her. She remembered all those nights when she had sat on the prayer mat after fajr², tears streaming down her cheeks, praying for a miracle.

Her mother’s prayers were answered when Aqeela was identified by CHIP as part of a damage assessment exercise in the village. After a proper medical examination, she was provided with knee-ankle-foot orthosis (KAFO), an assistive device prescribed to PWDs in an effort to stabilise joints and assist the leg muscles. The orthosis provided Aqeela with the support required for her to start walking without the aid of others. At the same time, CHIP sensitized her family to the importance of taking care of her nutrition so that she remained healthy and continued to make good progress. To her family’s joy, she was no longer confined to her bed!

Alongside this, CHIP mobilised and sensitized her family on the significance of education for Aqeela’s brighter future. They convinced her parents to enroll her in a local school to ensure that she could develop the requisite skills to become independent. But in a society like Baith Bogha, it was equally important that the local community were welcoming and accepting of women and PWDS. For this reason, CHIP facilitators introduced the community to ideas of women’s right to education amongst other fundamental rights. CHIP also implemented a social integration plan for PWDs to ensure that locals included them in their routine social activities.

Seeing Aqeela study hard has made her mother realize how proud she is of her daughter. Her daughter’s eagerness to learn has made her resolve that she will make sure her daughter progresses to higher education.

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² Fajr: dawn (in Arabic); first of the five prayers offered by Muslims.
RECOVERING FROM THE FALL

He grappled the edge of the table to regain his balance. His right leg continued to shake uncontrollably as he attempted to make his way to the toilet on his own. He thought that maybe if he could use the walls for support, he would be able to walk to the far end of the room. He had stood up from his chair with a lot of determination but the feat seemed almost impossible now. He reached out to his left, placing his palm on the rough concrete wall as he attempted to shift his weight onto his left foot. He put his other hand on his right knee, as if to soothe the pain in his leg, but to no avail. He edged closer trying to gain support from the wall next to him. As he tried to take a step forward, his right leg gave way and he collapsed on to the floor.

For Muzamil, life had always been about dependency. He had never known what it had meant to move around freely; he had never known the simple joy of running out on the streets with his friends. What he had seen of the world was from the windows of his home: a view restricted to the two feet by two feet hole in the wall. He had been born with a physical disability where his right foot was deformed. Both of his legs were weak: he could barely move around and faced difficulties even standing up. For a nine year old who wanted nothing more than to enjoy his childhood, this was a nightmare he could not wake up from. His parents had tried everything they could but their affordability was limited and Muzamil suffered the consequences.

When CHIP found him, he was standing at the edge of a cliff: one push and he was ready to fall into a vicious cycle of despair and low self-esteem. But his encounter with the CHIP team proved to be a real turning point in his life. After being medically assessed, he was taught various physiotherapy exercises to help reduce stiffness and pain and increase flexibility and strength. As his physical health began to recover it was equally important that he was emotionally stable as well. To help regain his self-confidence and sense of independence, he was made to attend several motivational and confidence building counseling sessions. To further ensure that he received just the right support to facilitate his recovery, counseling sessions were also conducted with his family members.

But the biggest blow to his self-esteem was only healed when he was enrolled into a local school and encouraged to continue his education. Before CHIP, he would often wonder why people equated his intellectual abilities with his physical incapacities. Yes, he could not walk without support from others but did that mean that he should be deprived of a chance to education. At the same time, he was concerned about his father. After him, Muzamil was the only male in the household. How could he one day assume the role of the family's breadwinner if he could not even walk? How could he relieve the great burden on his father’s shoulders of running the household alone? When he began attending school, a part of Muzamil’s worries disappeared.

Anyone who sees him now would probably have difficulty believing that such a vibrant and confident young boy could have gone through the emotional turbulence that Muzamil did. But he had turned over a new leaf. He had gotten the support he had needed and he had been given another chance to realize his dreams. He wished to continue studying and one day stand on his own two feet to support those who had held his hand through the darkest time of his life: his parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Muzamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Kanwan Wali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Deformity in right foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>Physiotherapy; Capacity building sessions; Family counseling;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Name
Gender
Age
Village
Disability
Interventions
"Put the book away, Momin. It's time for you to go to sleep," his mom said as she sat next to him lovingly brushing the hair from his forehead. Momin wiggled away from his mother; he had just reached the most interesting part of the story! "Momin!" his mother tried again to get his attention. He looked at her and smiled, "Ten more minutes, Ma." His mother sighed and shook her head in joyful disbelief. She had never thought her young one would be such a bookworm. There was not a single moment of the day when Momin did not have his nose buried inside a book. He lived in his own fantasy world of naughty children, talking animals and fairy tales. But at least he was happy. And after everything Momin had endured in the seven years since he had been born, that was all that mattered to her anyways.

She vividly remembered the day Momin was born. Oh, the joy on her husband’s face at the birth of a son! The first time she had held him, she had known that he would one day make her a very proud mother. But she had been devastated the day they had realized that one of his legs was impaired. His disability could have been treated but his family lacked the financial resources required to access advanced medical treatment. As a result, he had never been able to stand on his legs and walk on his own. He had spent most of his life entirely confined to his bed, fully dependent on his family members for support even to satisfy his most basic needs and away from the other young boys his age as he was unable to attend school.

CHIP found him in such a state during a damage assessment exercise being carried out in the village. Upon proper medical examination he was given a KAFO to provide support for his impaired leg which would allow him to move about freely without requiring the assistance of others. He was also taught physiotherapy exercises to complement the orthosis provided. He was also made to participate in several capacity building sessions in order to help boost his morale and encourage him to interact with other boys his age. At the same time, it was very important to engage in similar sessions with his family so that they would provide the necessary emotional and physical support that was imperative for Momin’s quick recovery and integration with the rest of the society.

In the past seven years, his mother had convinced herself that she would never be able to see him move about on his own. And it was for this very reason that every morning as Momin woke up, got out of bed, made his way to the toilet and managed to get dressed on his own, no matter what she was doing, she would stop, look at him and could not help but smile. She could not believe the progress that Momin was making every single day; he was walking, going to school, gaining knowledge. He was growing! He had successfully completed class one and all his teacher were quick to point out how well Momin was doing at school. Even his father was extremely proud of the progress his son was making and would often visit his school to obtain feedback on his performance.

While Momin was too young to decide what he wanted to become when he grew up, his mother was ready with an answer. She understood the great love he had for learning and she understood how much he enjoyed reading books. And that is why she had come to the most natural conclusion: one day, when he was older, he would also love to impart the knowledge that he had gained to other students like him.
ALIENATING THE FAMILIAR

What are you doing here Shamim?” my neighbor asked me. “I am here to help with the festivities! The whole village is here for the wedding and I thou...” her voice trailed off as the woman cut her short, “But you can barely walk. You should have just stayed at home!” And with that she walked away hurriedly bearing a tray full of sweets. A teary eyed Shamim limped her way to a corner of the tent, where she sat for the next few hours observing her surroundings in silence. Twinkling lights, fresh flowers and brightly coloured clothes, the ambiance was just perfect, radiant with happiness. And there she was; she spoke to no one and no one made an attempt to speak to her. At the end of the night, when she made her way back she wondered why she was treated like a stranger in a society she had known all her life.

Shamim had suffered a physical disability in one of her legs after giving birth to a child at the age of 19 leaving her unable to walk. And that was the answer to her question. But she failed to understand why her disability mattered so much to others. How could her inability to walk be used to judge her character? She knew she was unable to perform her household chores and was often unable to look after her children properly. But did that mean she should be shunned? She had grown up in these streets and these same women who had refused to acknowledge her existence were her childhood playmates. How could there be such a drastic change in their attitude? And it was this thought of being constantly judged that shattered her confidence and self-esteem to bits.

When CHIP had found her, Shamim was buried deep in the hole she had dug for herself to hide from the rest of the society. She had been forced to believe that she was of no use, and never could be. She was a prisoner to her parasitic disability; her home was her solitary confinement. But as they say, recovery begins from the darkest moment and it may not be an easy ride but it is all uphill from then on. CHIP staff went through her entire life history and gave her the means and the strength to overcome my disability. CHIP trained community mobilisers taught her physiotherapy exercises which helped greatly in alleviating the crippling pain in her joints. She also participated in several capacity building sessions aimed at helping her regain her lost self-esteem and motivation.

Shamim has come a long way since. She is now much more confident and has found a clear goal for herself: to raise her children well and ensure that they receive a good education so that they do not have to face the same problems that she did. But at the same time she wishes to play a greater role in supporting her family. Her loving husband, who has been a constant companion for her, is also physically disabled. To meet the needs of the family and to give her children the bright future that they deserve, Shamim has assumed another role alongside her duties as a wife and a mother. After completing her household chores, Shamim runs her own mini-tailoring business from home. On other days, she helps her husband run his grocery shop which is also supported by CHIP.

As she sat on her veranda, in the cool spring breeze, there was a knock on her door. Her daughter opened the door and the woman from next door stepped in clutching a bag full of cloth. “Shamim, it is my son's wedding. You have to make sure the wedding clothes are stitched perfectly!” the woman exclaimed. “Yes, I will. Why don't you come sit and have some tea?” she replied back. “No no! There is so much left to do. I will come again. And you must come to wedding!” the woman answered as she left leaving Shamim smiling to herself.
THE FRUIT OF FORBEARANCE

"Ma, I want to go to school. Why won’t you let me go to school?" he proclaimed in agitation. "Because you cannot and in any case, your father also thinks that you should not go to school. You are old enough to sit at the shop now," his mother replied back coolly. It was almost as if she was repeating the same words that his grandmother had said to him in the morning. "Why? Why can I not go to school?" he asked again losing his patience now. His mother calmly continued to make the bed, ignoring his question. He looked at her in disbelief. It was as if his pleas were falling on deaf ears. But he decided to go on nevertheless, "Tell me!" he yelled. "Stop it. I don't want to hear of this anymore. You can hardly even walk on your own!"

And there it was, his disability being used as a reason for depriving him further. He had already been restricted to the walls of his house, away from his friends and the rest of the society. He had already lost his freedom and now he was being stripped away from the chance of having a brighter future that was free from the clutches of poverty and illiteracy. He remembered vividly the he had contracted fever with a terrible headache; he was only eleven years old then. The pain in his back was killing him; he was overcome with a sense of lethargy. He had never understood why his father had never taken him for treatment even though the polio could have easily been cured by vaccine. Neither had he ever contemplated the thought that this was one of the last days on which he would be able to walk on his own.

Touqeer was identified by CHIP as part of the disability assistance programme. After a full medical examination, he was given a KAFO to provide him with the artificial support required to boost his mobility. He was also made to do physiotherapy exercises to alleviate the pain of his disability and to ensure he took full advantage of the orthosis provided to him. A disability friendly latrine was also installed in his house to allow him to move around with ease. Simultaneously, he was made to participate in several capacity building sessions to help boost his morale and his integration into the rest of society. Although Touqeer had never really lost the hope that he would one be able to go to school again, he learnt that it was best to remain silent on the issue.

While his father did not wish for him to continue his education, he was very pleased with his son when Touqeer started managing a small grocery shop supported by CHIP. The eighteen year old can be seen hard at work at his shop day and night. To those who do not know the story behind his struggles, he seems content. And of course, why should not he be? After all, he was earning PKR 6,000 every month, capable of supporting his family and in a few years time, when his business was well-established, maybe even more. And even though Touqeer wished to expand his business, in his heart he strived for a different cause: to one day be able to continue his education. He knew that his mother supported him but he also understood that there was little she could do in front of his father.

And the reason behind this was only that he realized the importance of education. He wanted to free himself of the vicious cycle he had been born in: poverty, illiteracy, poor future prospects, poverty... He had resolved to not just improve his own living conditions but also to work hard to ensure that other PWDs in the village were made to feel as if they belonged in the community. Actively participating in the CBO was only the first step towards achieving that goal.
STEPPING OUT OF THE COCOON

Hearing: it is often a sense that we take for granted. The immeasurable, at times unidentifiable, sounds that flood our ears every single day often go unappreciated because we have never had to live without them. It was probably for this reason that the famous Helen Keller often said that it would be a blessing if an adult person was deafened for a few days; the silence would teach him the joys of sound.

Ishfaq would probably agree. He observed the world in silence as he sat on the steps leading to the entrance of his house. He saw the tree sway with the wind but he could not enjoy the rustle of the leaves; he observed the stray dog wag his tail and run along the street, but he could not hear it bark in joy. Having been born with a speech and hearing disability in a family that could not afford his treatment, Ishfaq led a very different life to the other seven-year-olds in the village. He had been brought up in the cocoon created by his parents and he had not been given the chance to leave it. He was housebound having been deprived of the chance to go to school. He had little interaction, if any, with the rest of the world and the only friends he had known were his family members.

CHIP identified Ishfaq during the damage assessment exercise in his village, Basti Bhatti Javaid. After a proper medical examination, he was provided with hearing aid. For the first time, he could hear properly, he could relate what he was seeing to the sounds he was hearing. He could hear his parents, the clanking of dishes, his mother calling his name – it was all crystal clear. He could see his parents beaming with happiness. But this was not the end of his story; in fact, far from it. Ishfaq was made to attend several capacity building sessions to help facilitate his recovery and boost his confidence as he stepped into a world he had previously been shielded from. His progress is clearly visible from the fact that he has now begun to speak. At the same time his parents were also made to attend counseling sessions so they could provide him with the support he needed.

His mother was overwhelmed with joy on his first day of school. Given his condition she had never thought he would be able to step out on his own with the other children in the village. His mother put a hand to his forehead and stroked his hair lovingly. He felt strange but somehow seemed to find strength in his mother’s caress. He had been worried, like any other child, about his first day at school. What if he did not make any friends? What if the other children made fun of him? As he picked up his school bag, given to him by CHIP, he remembered thinking how he will spend the whole day away from home. His anxiety only lasted a day. Ever since then, Ishfaq has loved going to school. His teachers are very supportive of him and motivate him to perform better. And at the end of the day, his friends are there to play with and make school fun.

Every day after school, Ishfaq comes back from school, has dinner and rushes to the mosque for his daily Quran lesson. Every day when he comes back, his mother asks him to rest for a while. And every day he protests and runs out to play with his schoolmates. Every single time, his mother follows him to the door to watch him play on the streets. And she smiles as she thinks to herself how his life has changed in the past few years. And it is in this moment that she decides what she wants from her son in the future – for him to become a teacher, well-respected and financially independent.
DIFFICULT FIRST STEPS

In a desolate room at the back of the house, a boy lay on the charpoy in the heat staring up at the ceiling, almost motionless. His mother forced herself away from her daily chores to ask if he wanted something to eat. He did not move. She sat down next to him on the charpoy and placed a hand to his forehead, pushing the hair out of his eyes. She asked again, slightly louder this time, the concern ringing in her voice, "It is past noon. Do you want to eat something?" He looked up at her and nodded, giving a half smile. He took hold of her arm for support as he sat up. Sliding his feet into the battered old blue plastic slippers, he slowly got up and began to make his way to the door with great difficulty. His mother wiped a tear as she watched him in anguish and prayed for a miracle that would alleviate her son's pain.

Liaqat had spent most of his childhood bedbound and all of it within the confines of his house. He was born with cerebral palsy and experienced great difficulty when walking. Because his limbs were not used to the movement, his occasional attempts to walk about on his own put an even greater strain on his body. But this was not the end of his miseries: Liaqat also suffered from a hearing impairment which significantly hampered his ability to communicate effectively with others. While his parents had tried to seek treatment for their son, there was little they could do within their meager resources to help him overcome his disabilities. At the same time his parents were also made to attend counseling sessions so they could provide him with the support he needed.

Liaqat had been discovered during CHIP’s damage assessment exercise in his village, Baith Bogha North. He remembered how shy he was the first time CHIP staff had come to visit him. He was so frightened, he could barely even speak. And eventually, he had warmed up to them, telling them about his entire life history. After a medical examination, Liaqat was given a wheelchair to boost his mobility and hearing aid to assist him in communicating with others. As cerebral palsy is not curable but can only be treated through physiotherapy to help reduce muscle stiffness, CHIP field staff taught him various exercises which not only helped relieve the symptoms but also boosted his sense of independence and self-esteem. His parents were also made to attend counseling sessions so they could provide him with the support he needed.

Perhaps, the biggest impact CHIP had on his life was the fact that he was now capable of going to school. He had been extremely happy the day he had learnt that he had been admitted to school, but that happiness had almost immediately been followed by intimidation. He had been afraid of how the other children would make fun of his disability. He had been afraid to step out of his comfort zone, away from his home and family. But he realized that all his fears had been for nothing. His teacher taught him very lovingly and encouraged him to come to school regularly. He also made a lot of friends which he would often play with after school. He had finally been given a chance at a normal life and he was determined to shine.

But nothing could beat the joy on his mother’s face every morning when he was leaving for school, every afternoon as he sat down to revise his lessons and every evening as he left to play with the other kids on the street. Her prayers had been answered and now all she wished for was her son to continue studying hard and become a teacher in school one day.

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3 Charpoy: a traditional woven bed in the subcontinent.