The New Chapter

Empowering Persons with Disabilities to Become Persons with Different Abilities in District Jehlum

Case Studies of People with Disabilities
December 2014
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Our Approach for Mainstreaming Disability

We work at five levels simultaneously for mainstreaming disability in local development through social mobilization. It is believed that if our approach is implemented in its true letter and spirit each level produces a ripple effect, which eventually leads to change in the national policies, and practices and achieves inclusive development as an overall goal. The major focus under each level is explained below.

Individual level
The objective of this level is to enable disabled to manage his/her life independently. This level strengthens the self-confidence of the disabled for making an effort towards improvement in their quality of life through multiple means such as self growth of disabled, rehabilitation of disabled and enabling the inclusion of disabled at various levels.

Family level
The objective of this level is creating an environment in and around disabled, which can support disabled on full time basis in gaining confidence and realizing their potential. This level becomes a support in ensuring inclusion in social and communal life. This is done through increasing awareness level of family in enabling disabled in learning independent living and participating in social and recreational activities, education, economic activities and decision making and creating enabling infrastructure.

Village level
The objective of this level is to create an enabling environment at the village level which encourages inclusion and accessibility especially at the decision making level and making village infra structure level accessible. This is done through increasing awareness level of influential, school teachers, lady health workers, councillors and other community members in enabling disabled to become part of community development, decision making and inclusive community development initiatives.

Tehsil level
The overall objective of tehsil level is to promote a support environment at the nearest public institutions. It is also to facilitate disabled and their respective community organization to access public facilities for referral and resource mobilization. This is done through establishment of information, assessment and referral facility for disabled at tehsil headquarter hospital, sensitisation of staff of tehsil headquarters hospital, tehsil municipal administration, mainstream schools, colleges and technical education centres etc.

District level
The objective of district level is to create a support environment, which can advocate rights of disabled at multiple levels. It also focuses on making district decision-making inclusive through sensitization of district stakeholders especially social welfare department, district headquarter hospital, education department and other organisation and conducting district level reviews to discuss achievements, successful examples and challenges while implementing concept of for mainstreaming disability in local development through social mobilization.

Provincial level
The objectives of provincial level are to share experiences from the real life examples created in district Jhelum and mobilization of Disabled Persons Organisations for voicing their joint concerns towards promotion of inclusion in provincial polices.

National level
The objective of this level is to promote inclusive development at the policy level. It is important to highlight experiences, successes and challenges from the rural areas be shared with reliable statistics with policy makers for making policies inclusive.
PREAMBLE

Persons with disabilities are amongst one of the most vulnerable groups of society. This finding is particularly true for villages in Pakistan where illiteracy and poverty is rampant and persons with disabilities are treated as nothing more than third class citizens and considered to be a burden on the already extremely limited resources. Often, treatment for such persons is at the bottom of a long list of needs for the family. Their lack of ability to fend for themselves further renders them ostracised, lonely and dejected. Given such circumstances, their sense of incapacity is exacerbated by their social standing; they find themselves caught in a vicious cycle they cannot get out of without someone from the outside willing to lend them a hand.

Civil Society Human and Institutional Development Programme (CHIP) with support from Sightsavers Pakistan and Umeed implemented a project, “Empowering Persons with Disabilities to Become Persons with Different Abilities through Inclusive Development in District Jhelum”. The project aimed to extend support and training to persons with disabilities in 30 villages in district Jhelum in order to promote inclusion of such persons in the community and to help them become important and active members of society by attaining physical, financial and emotional independence. The project aims to encourage persons with disabilities to be able to live, work and socialise in the same way as their normal counterparts in a society that is both empathetic and sympathetic to their needs.

This booklet tells the story of 13 such persons with disabilities and their plight. It tells the story of 13 people who were left shattered by their circumstances with barely anyone to help them pick up the pieces. It tells the story of 13 people who with time had come to the compromise that life was never going to change for them until one day it did. This booklet tells the tale of 13 people who sat down to write a new chapter in their life – the chapter that tells how they stood up once again to fight their demons both, the ones that they had created for themselves and the ones that society had inflicted on them. Each of these 13 people recalls how they had abandoned hope and how they found it again.

Each of the stories in the booklet tells the story of how 13 different people transformed themselves, their lives and their perception of other around them from being persons with disabilities to become persons with different abilities.
1. Life’s Little Tests

She longed to go outside and play hopscotch with the other girls. Like any other 16 year old, all she ever wanted was to sit on the porch with her friends on a hot summer afternoon, an ice lolly in one hand, as they talked about ordinary things: clothes, school and family. She wished to be able to visit her friends’ houses on her own, spend the evening doing their homework from school together. She wanted to live in a world where her biggest worry was being scolded by the teacher for not learning yesterday’s lesson or fighting over new clothes with her sister.

But life threw her a different curve instead. Born with a hearing impairment and permanently deformed legs, Alia spent a life dependant on her mother to fulfill even her most basic needs. She had barely known a life outside the confines of her house. The few times that she had seen the outside world, she had been carried by her mother. As time went by and Alia became older, it became increasingly difficult for her mother to carry her outside the house. By age 11, Alia had learned to live with her condition, no questions asked, and so had her mother. But no matter how strong they were, they could never have prepared for what came next. One day, bored by her loneliness and lack of electricity in the household, Alia began to play with the fodder cutting machine. Her mother tried to stop her but she knew that the machine was not much of a danger because of no power in the house. But her worst fears were realised when she heard her daughter scream; as she rushed to the other room, she saw Alia fainted in a pool of her own blood. Oh Lord, another test for her little one? How would she survive without her arm?

Her mother loved Alia; she spent most of her day helping Alia move around the house, take her to the toilet, change her clothes. But there was always a single regret that plagued her mind: what if it was their poverty and illiteracy that had reduced Alia to this condition? What if she had stopped her daughter from playing with that machine that day? If she had the money to afford Alia’s treatment earlier on, would her daughter’s life be different? CHIP’s arrival in the village was like a breath of fresh air. The CHIP-provided doctor for the village examined Alia and she underwent a further medical examination conducted by an Ear, Nose & Throat specialist. Based on these assessments, Alia was able to obtain a disability certificate and simultaneously CHIP provided her with wheelchair and toilet chair to help improve her mobility both within and outside the house. She was also provided with hearing aid to help her in communicating with others. All of these interventions have proved to be life changing for Alia.

It is strange how overcoming a hurdle that appears small to us can be an achievement of a lifetime for somebody else. For Alia, being able to independently brush her hair, change her clothes, eat her food or use the toilet was a massive achievement. Not only did it boost her self-confidence, it restored in her a sense of hope that she had lost long ago. As part of her rehabilitation programme, she was also given training on various topics including disability equality and independent living, both of which went a long way in pushing her out of her inertia. At the same time, she was made to undergo counselling sessions and speech therapy to help improve her communication skills. The sessions had a great impact on her every day social life. The girl who spent most of her day lying in bed alone, depressed, wondering what a burden she is on her family now spends her day with her two best friends who visit her daily.

| Age | 16 |
|Gender | Female |
| Village | Dilawar, Darapur, Sanghoi |
| Disability | Hearing Impairment; Deformed Legs; Amputated Forearm. |
| CHIP Interventions | Medical Assessment; Disability Certificate Wheel chair; Hearing Aid; Workshops on awareness raising, mobility and speech therapy. |
2. Nightmarish Reality

Dil looked around him. The hustle bustle on the roads, the sound from the engine of the auto rickshaw, the buildings and the call of the vendors on the side walk - this place was too familiar. He had seen it before. Rawalpindi; yes, it was Rawalpindi. How could he have forgotten? But what was he doing here now? He looked at the watch on his wrist. It showed 12:45, just a little past noon. But how could this be? How did he get here? He grabbed the shoulder of a man walking past him, “Bhai, what day is it?” The man looked startled but answered back, “Monday.” What? But it was Friday today.

“What is the date today?” he asked again. “I don’t know,” he answered back looking clearly annoyed as he walked away. Confused he looked around as if to make sense of his surroundings. He noticed a calendar on the wall of the shop - a calendar from 2012. “What year is it?” he asked the shopkeeper. He barely heard the shopkeeper answer, “2012,” before his surroundings melted away. He found himself on a lift; the same lift. A strange realisation dawned on him; he felt like he had been here before. And then it came crashing back to him. He panicked. No! Not again. Not this time. May be he could save himself this time. Yes! As he began to run away, he fell from the lift. Again. For a split second he had thought that life had given him another chance. He hit the ground and woke up seconds later in his bed with a cold sweat. Maybe this had all been a nightmare, but as he tried to move, he realised how he could not feel his legs anymore. They were broken and lifeless. Once again, like in the dream, the realisation came crashing down on him. This was real.

His nightmares were the worst part of his traumatic experience. They were even worse than the pain he had felt when his relatives had decided to leave him to wallow in his miseries alone, worse than the sympathetic looks he got from everyone. They reminded him of everything he had lost in life and how he could no longer support his family, his wife and three kids. Every step he took towards recovery, towards hope, all it took was one nightmare to wash it all away. The arrival of CHIP in his village marked another turning point in his life. After a medical assessment, CHIP helped him obtain a disability certificate and provided him with a walking stand and a toilet chair. The street where he lived was also made accessible to help improve his mobility. Simultaneously he was provided with mobility training and physiotherapy to help him get accustomed to moving about independently without assistance from his family members.

But the real change in his personality came from the change he experienced in his social and economic conditions. CHIP helped him set up a tuck shop and provided him with business management training. Having matriculated from school, Dil was able successfully start and run his own little business in the village with some assistance from his wife. He was able to quickly pick up on basic accounting principles and now maintains his income and expense books for the shop and also, a sale and purchase ledger. The tuck shop is the main source of income for the family and has instilled a sense of pride in Dil. Concurrently, with the help of counselling sessions and support from the CCB, Dil was able to regain his self-confidence once again. He is currently an active member of the CCB in his village and attends all monthly meetings and social events. He has also begun to visit his old friends.

As his condition improves, his nightmares seem to become less frequent. He enjoys the comfort of being able to walk outside his home without any support from his wife. He enjoys the fresh air and most importantly, he enjoys feeling fresh again. He is no longer trapped in a limbo. And for the first time in a long while, he has found a reason to smile again.

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<td>CHIP Intervention</td>
<td>Medical Assessment; Disability Certificate; Walking Stand; Toilet Chair; Tuck Shop; Counselling sessions; Mobility and business management trainings.</td>
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**3. Young Woes**

Her mother worried about her, sometimes a bit too much. But did she really have an option? She lived in a society where she knew disability was a curse, which deserved nothing but sympathy and pity. She wanted so much more for her daughter. She wanted her to have a normal life, a life not fraught with difficulties and hardship. She wanted a life for her daughter where she did not have to endure the pain and suffering that she did now. She was just a little girl, her little girl. How was it fair that she was being put through so much.

How could she be expected to bear so much at such a young age? And what would happen to her in the future? Yes, what about her future? Would she ever get married? Would she ever be independent? She knew she would not live forever to take care of her daughter, to protect her. She wanted to give the world to her. But unfortunately she was helpless.

Iqra’s right forearm was amputated leaving the six year old restricted in her daily activities and bound by the walls in her house. She stayed inside all day long often taking care of her younger brothers and sisters. Her mother made sure that she stayed within the cocoon she had built for her daughter - this was her defence mechanism, her motherly instinct protecting her child from others in the village. Everyone thought that it was her fault her child was like this. How could they think that any mother would want her child to go through such hardship? They blamed it on karma; everyone in the village believed that it was God’s way of punishing their family for all of their bad actions and misdeeds. Surely that could not be right. This could not be right. But all of this simply added to her worry: her daughter would have to face a lot of difficulties in her social life atop the problems she would face in taking care of herself and performing daily chores.

Poverty and illiteracy added to their troubles. Iqra’s mother was unaware of any medical cure that could treat her child or at least alleviate the difficulties she faced. She thought that her daughter would have to live with her disability forever. When CHIP arrived in her village, Iqra’s mother was still unsure about whether any difference could be made in her daughter’s life. After a medical assessment, Iqra was given a prosthetic forearm - something completely unheard of by Iqra or her family. Did such a thing exist in the world that could make up for her daughter’s lost arm? Suddenly, her daughter was happy again, having both functional arms. Just like everybody her age. She was, if nothing, a step closer towards living a normal life. But Iqra’s recovery would be incomplete if it did not include changing the way the society perceived persons with disabilities. CHIP conducted awareness raising sessions at community level which aimed at sensitising the masses about the causes of disabilities as well as the rights of disabled persons.

Simultaneously, with the help of the local community mobiliser working under the auspices of CHIP, Iqra was enrolled into the local government school. Her bright future depended on her education and CHIP ensured that she had ongoing support available to her. The community mobiliser regularly visits Iqra to assist her in her studies and to ensure that everything is well at school and at home. Going to school has also transformed her social life. She has found a platform through which she can communicate with other children her age; she is no longer fighting an isolated battle. She has made many friends at both school and in her mohallah. She is happy. Iqra now spends her leisure time outside of school playing with her friends and also actively and confidently participates in sports and other extracurricular activities at school.

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1. *Mohallah [Urdu]: neighbourhood*
4. Broken Threads

“When do you want the clothes by?” Irfan asked. “Can you make them by the end of next week please?” they lady answered back. “I can try but I have a lot of other clothes due by then too. I cannot delay them any further,” he answered back. “Okay then, I guess by the week after?” she murmured. “Yes, that is possible. Goodbye now,” he replied waving at her as she left the shop. He returned back to what he loved doing the most in this world: stitching. Irfan enjoyed the hum of his stitching machine; he found it soothing.

It had marked a turning point in his life and the hum was a reminder of everything good that he had been given in life. It reminded him of his strength and his ability to take charge over his life without worrying about what other people thought of him. He had spent a life wallowing in his miseries, taking to heart what society said about him; but not anymore. No one understood the battle that he had been fighting; it was not easy. What did they know?

Irfan had led a normal life until he turned 10 years old. With the onset of disease, his left leg became two inches shorter than his right leaving him unable to walk. His parents sought treatment for their son but all their efforts were in vain. His condition did not improve. But for Irfan, his disability did not only mean that he became physically incapacitated to move independently. For him, it meant that he was forced to leave school. Almost simultaneously, he found himself ostracised from the rest of the world. The friends he had known now found themselves that was completely divergent to his. One by one they all left him. Others in society thought it was acceptable to make fun of him and cat-call every time they saw Irfan attempting to walk. He became a source of entertainment for everyone and a burden on his family. It was then that he decided to stay at home, in a self-imposed exile. He stopped socialising with people in the village. It was then that he discovered his passion for stitching and it was this that kept him busy at home.

When CHIP visited his village, Irfan was still unsure about what could be done to change his condition. This is who he was. And this is how he would stay. He had convinced himself that nothing could ever change. But how could he have known that change is the only constant in this world. His life changed for the better as quickly as it had deteriorated 18 years ago. After a medical assessment with CHIP, he was given a surgical shoe to help cure his leg length discrepancy and assist in walking from one place to another. He was also assisted in obtaining a disability certificate for himself and a special computerized National Identity Card (CNIC). After further analysis of his potentials, CHIP also helped him to set up his own tailoring shop. Not only did this help him attain financial independence but also assisted in boosting his confidence. It was his way of showing to everyone in the village, everyone who had ever doubted him that he was also capable of making something of himself. He was also capable of earning on his own.

As part of his rehabilitation plan, CCB Dilawar was established through which CHIP conducted awareness raising sessions on disability equality for all members of the community. The session was attended by farmers, teachers, students and religious leaders alike. The session was the first step towards changing the mindset of the people around him. But perhaps, the biggest change for Irfan came from within. Once shy and isolated from society, he assumed one of the most important positions in society for a person with disability. During one of the CCB meetings, Irfan expressed his willingness to work for the rehabilitation and inclusion of disabled person. He was then appointed as the community mobiliser for the CCB. The man who once spent weeks on end without stepping outside his house now spend most of his time socialising with others, listening to their problems and helping PwDs cope with issues faced in their daily routines.
5. The Cawing of the Crows

She sat on the charpoy in the veranda behind her house staring into oblivion: the vast green field behind her house. The sun beat fiercely from above. She wiped a drop of sweat from her forehead. She looked overhead to see a flock of crows flying above. One of them flew close to her and eventually sat down on the sill of the window beside her. It opened its beak to caw. And again, but she could not hear what the crow had just said. It was like a silent picture; she saw everything but heard nothing.

She kept staring at it wondering what sound it had just made. She looked at her brother who was sitting next to her. She saw the same question in his eyes. What did the crow just say? What did it sound like? He shook his head, as if to answer that he did not know. She understood and nodded in response. Enough for today; she had chores to do. As she got up to leave, she could not help but feel a nagging sense of incompleteness.

Irum had been born with a hearing and speech impairment but she had not known a different life. For the past 25 years, she had lived life without the joys of being able to hear and respond. But she had learned to live with. The same disability was inherited by her two sisters and brother as well. This had translated into neither of them being able to go to school; they stayed at home. She helped around with the household chores alongside her sisters but once her work around the house was complete, Irum would sit and learn how to stitch and embroider. She was extremely skilled at what she did but somehow none of that seemed to matter. Her father was worried about her; who would take care of her after he passed away. He knew the people in his village; he understood clearly that none of them would be willing to take care of his children. He was worried, and rightly so, that no one would be willing to marry his daughter. After all, there was a risk that their grandchildren would be deaf and dumb too. Who would be willing to take such a risk?

Irum had become accustomed to spending most of her days at home. She knew she was looked down upon and she had enough problems in her life already. She did not have the courage to meet people. She could not stand how differently she was treated. She did not want anyone’s sympathy. However, all this began to change with the arrival of CHIP in her village. After a medical assessment, CHIP helped her obtain a disability certificate. She was also given hearing aid to directly improve her condition. Concurrently, she received ongoing training sessions in speech therapy and sign language training, both of which helped her improve her communication skills. Her hearing problem is now resolved and she is making good progress having learnt several small words through speech therapy. Disability equality sessions were also conducted in the village to bring about positive change in the mindset of the people towards PWDs and their rights. People in the village are more sensitised about PWDs and the biggest proof of it all: Irum is now engaged to be married soon.

CHIP also assisted Irum with the setting up of a tailoring and embroidery design shop - two skills that Irum had already learnt to master. To complement these further, Irum was also given business management training that helped her in maintaining an income and expense book and also to help her reinvest in her business through selling and purchasing. But the shop is not merely a source of income for her. It is also a means for her to socialise with other women from the village who are not just customers at her shop but also her friends. Every so often, while Irum is busy hard at work, a crow would come and sit on the window sill at the shop. It would open its beak and caw as loud as it could. And Irum would always stop to listen; she would cherish every moment of it. And as she would watch the crow fly away she would smile to herself as she understood the warm feeling inside her: contentment.
6. Peering Through the Cracks

He remembered standing shyly behind the door, peering out only when he was sure no one else was looking. He could barely see anything, but he could still see. He wondered why his mother was ashamed of him. “Go back in your room, Amin. I don’t have time for this,” she would speak, sternly but in a hushed tone. “But ma, I want to meet the guests too. I am bored alone in my room,” he argued back. “No. Go back inside and do not annoy me. I have a lot of work to do right now. I have to prepare the food for the guests,” she would snap back.

But why was he the only one locked up inside? His mother had no difficulty in introducing his other siblings to the guests. Why was he the only one being forced to stay away? Did he do something wrong? But he was good today; he even completed his daily chores today... then, what was it? He curled up in bed thinking about what he had done to deserve this.

Amin was not born blind; his eyesight deteriorated with time until he lost it completely. He grew up thinking that his disability was a crime. The children in the neighbourhood rejected him; they made fun of him. They made fun of how he could not walk without someone guiding him. They made fun of how he could not see. Amin often wondered how someone could find the state that he was in amusing. If anything, if they could step in his shoes for one day, they would see how sad it was, how lonely and broken he was. They would see that he did not have the confidence to step out of his home. He did not even have the confidence to speak to others without stammering. They would see how hard his life was. And they would understand why he stayed inside his home most of the days. He found it ironic that everyone around him, his family, the people in his village, could physically see so much more than he could but understand so little of what they saw.

This was the condition CHIP had found him in: desolate, ostracised and steeped in self-doubt. After a medical assessment, Amin received a walking stick to help him in walking from one place to another without bumping into things. CHIP also provided him with the guidance he needed to independently move about in the form of mobility training and counselling sessions. The assistance went a long way in helping him being able to move about without support from his family members. CHIP also made the toilet in his home, his street and a nearby water-well more accessible so as to improve accessibility for Amin. He also received trainings on disability rehabilitation and inclusion of PwDs in mainstreaming which gave him the confidence to attain the independence he needed to lead a happy life. As his mobility increased, there was massive improvement in his social life. He actively participates in CCB meetings and also visits his friends daily, a great change for a man who did not even consider making friends with anyone.

CHIP also helped him set up a tuck shop near his house which has become the main source of income for the family. He was provided with financial and business management training. With the help and support of his wife, he is now able to maintain an income and expenses book and at the same time reinvest the profits in his shop by purchasing more items and growing his capacity. His newly attained financial independence has gone a long way in boosting his confidence. He had known a world where he was looked down upon and considered incapable of doing any work. However, as he successfully runs his little tuck shop he is not only able to look after his own and his family’s, his wife and three kids, every day needs but also able to slowly grow his shop. He now aspires to make use of his education to win back the control over his life that he had once lost. He aims to slowly expand his business - continuing to work hard - and showing all those who had doubted him and made fun of him that he was also capable of succeeding.
7. Demeaning Demeanour

Saima Bibi

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<td>CHIP</td>
<td>Medical Assessment; Disability Certificate; Wheelchair; Tuck Shop; Mobility Training, Counselling &amp; Awareness Raising Sessions</td>
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She heaved herself across the room making her way to water cooler. It seemed miles away even though it was barely a few steps away. Steps; being able to walk; what a luxury that was. And what a pity it was that most people failed to appreciate how lucky they were. They could simply get up and walk to their desired destination in a matter of seconds. Oh, the things she would do if she could do the same! She would run, jump, skip. She would go for long walks, admiring her surroundings. Alas!

Enough daydreaming, she decided to pick herself up again and heave. Just a few more before she got there. With all the strength that she could muster in her arms, she heaved her body as far as she could across the floor. Oh yes, she was finally there. She reached up for a glass. There was nothing there. Was all this effort for nothing? Could she not even drink a glass of water on her own? She no longer had the strength to push herself to the kitchen to grab a glass. Frustrated, she began to cry.

Saima had been struck with poliomyelitis at the age of 4. Due to no treatment, the attack had left both of her legs deformed and lifeless. Since then, she was unable to walk and had to crawl to the places she wanted to go. She was ashamed of herself; she considered herself a burden on her family. She found her state to be demeaning. She had sweep herself along the floor, often getting her clothes and herself dirty. When she was not trying to get to places herself, her mother had to take care of her. She often tried to help her mother in household her chores but her mobility was so severely restricted that she was either too slow or unable to complete the work on her own. She was ashamed that she was constant source of worry for her parents. She was ashamed of what the rest of the family, and in fact, the rest of the society, thought of her: that, she would never be able to do anything in life.

This was the condition she was in when she was discovered by CHIP. After medically assessing her condition, she was given a wheel chair which considerably improved her movement from one place to another. CHIP assisted her in obtaining CCB membership and made her street more accessible and disability friendly allowing her to attend and actively participate in CCB meetings and other social events being conducted. Her social interaction with her relatives and other women in the village also increased as her mother was able to take her daughter along to social events and ceremonies, unlike before. CHIP also helped her in obtaining a disability certificate. The assistance she was provided was complemented by the trainings provided. In particular, she attended disability equality awareness raising sessions and counselling sessions that went a long way in boosting her confidence and helping her in realise that she could do a lot more with her life.

Saima was impressed by the awareness raising sessions that were conducted in her village. Never before had she seen such ambitious and motivated PwDs. She was amazed by how the workshops were conducted by those who were put through the same hardship and torment that she had. The trainers themselves were disabled and were working hard to improve the recognition of rights of other PwDs in different villages. Seeing so many others like not letting their disability getting in the way of them living their life to fullest made her realise what God had given her. All her life she had been bitter; she had only ever focused on what she had been deprived from. The training sessions revived her hope; it made her realise that she too could do something for the better. Saima is now channeling this newfound sense of determination to run a small tuck shop on her own. The initiative was also set up with the assistance provided by CHIP and is now become a source of income for the family. In her leisure time, she has picked up on stitching and embroidery, skills that are being taught to her by her friend from the neighbourhood.
8. Her First Words

“This... water?” she stuttered with great difficulty as she pointed towards a half full glass of water. Her teacher nodded at her with a smile. “Yes, that is right Salma! Good girl,” she remarked. Salma’s performance had been outstanding. She was quickly picking up new words and even attempting to use basic sentences in her speech. Her teacher looked over to see her mother’s reaction. Needless to say, she was looking at her daughter with a mix of utmost happiness and amazement.

But who could blame her? She had never seen her daughter this way. It was an amazing sight, seeing her daughter being able to seek for the first time. She had always thought that their poverty was their curse and her daughter was paying the price for it. She had always wondered how different things would be if they had just been able to afford treatment or speech therapy. Would her daughter have known a different life? Would her daughter’s pain and suffering be reduced just a little bit? Would she have had a slightly more normal life?

Salma had always preferred staying at home with her mother. She hated being teased by the other children in the neighbourhood and the family. Yes, she could not speak; yes, she could not hear. But did that somehow automatically mean that she did not have the ability to feel either? She could not hear them but she saw it in their eyes. She saw the smirk on their face and the way they looked at her. And it was that reaction from everybody in the village that had forced her to stay locked up at home. It had destroyed her confidence – no one understood her except for her mother. She kept her safe from the mean children at school. She was her only friend and her only source of support. Her mother was her lifeline. But Salma did not understand why she was treated this way. She had never been anything but nice to the other girls in her school. Why did they not want to play with her? What was wrong with her?

Salma had been born with hearing and speech impairment. Even though her mother had realised this problem early on, she did not have the resources to get hearing aid and other treatments for her daughter. Salma considered herself lucky to have been admitted in the local government school despite her disability because her speech was not clear enough to be understood by others. Her mother tried her best to help her as much as possible, teaching her a few small words and basic sentences but her disability aggravated with the passage of time. Despite all the difficulties she had faced, Salma continued to go to school and also attended the local madrasa where she learned how to read the Quran. She was a fighter, standing against all odds, all her problems. But she was lonely. Being ostracised from all the other children her age had made her even more introverted than before. This was the condition CHIP had found her in.

CHIP initiated the rehabilitation project in Salma’s village and conducted a baseline survey through which Salma was identified. A visiting ENT specialist, arranged by CHIP, assessed her medical condition and recommended hearing aid which she received two months later. The hearing aid has gone a long way in helping Salma communicate with her family and now at school. Simultaneously, a speech therapist was arranged for her to train her and her family members. The teachers at her local school were also made to undergo sign language training alongside disability equality and sensitisation sessions. This has helped create a more welcoming environment for Salma at school where needs are looked after and she is given extra time and help to do her work. CHIP also provided her with a bag and kit. The community awareness sessions conducted in the village also helped in changing the perception of community members. The children in Salma’s school now include her in sports activities. She has also finally managed to make friends with the other girls in her school and neighbourhood.
9. **Loneliness**

Azram stood there embarrassed. He had regretted his decision to come out and attend one of his cousin’s wedding almost immediately, the minute he had stepped foot inside the tent. Everyone was in their best clothes. And look at the condition he had shown up in. His clothes were dirty and stained. He had been wearing the same *shalwar kameez* for the past week. Not that he had many options to choose from. He looked around to find a friendly and welcoming face; he found nothing. With a sinking feeling, his worst fears were confirmed: he did not belong here and he was not welcome here.

He left the wedding and somehow, like every other time he had decided to walk alone, found himself sitting idle at the hotel near Dani Dehra Chok. No one knew him there except for the waiting staff but that was alright. At least he did not have to attempt to make a conversation when he knew they had absolutely nothing to talk about. Unfortunately, he could not say the same about his family.

Azram suffered from osteomyelitis and mild scoliosis which resulted in his left leg becoming 2 inches shorter than his right. But the biggest obstacle in his life was not his disability. It was his loneliness. He had his father and brother to take care of him but he knew that they considered him to be nothing more than a burden on them and their limited resources. He would spend days lying in his bed at home. He could not help but think about all the negativity in his life. He was alone. He had no friends. He was unproductive. He had nothing to give to his family, financially or emotionally. This was it. This was his life. He would never recover from this disease. All the friends he had ever known had decided to leave him. None of them, no one had stayed by his side. But he could also no longer meet them as easily as he could before. They all went ahead with their lives while he stayed behind. Could he really blame them?

Azram was wallowing in his grief when CHIP discovered him. He had abandoned all hope of ever being able to recover from his disability. And it was this obstacle that CHIP attempted to tackle first. He was made to attend confidence building and socialisation counselling sessions to help ease his entry back into society. He was also made to attend awareness raising sessions given by other persons with disabilities that were part of CHIP’s team. Seeing them in action, overcoming their disabilities and working hard to promote rights of other persons with disabilities, was very encouraging for Azram. It made him realise that at the end of the day, nothing is impossible in our lives. And this too shall pass. It renewed a sense of determination with him. He too could get on with his life. He had to move on, move forward. With support from CHIP, Azram also became a member of the local CCB where he began to participate actively in community meetings alongside other social gatherings and activities.

But perhaps the most promising change in his personality came after he was able to set up his own tuck shop with help provided by CHIP. Alongside monetary support, CHIP provided Azram with financial and business management training that helped him in maintaining an income and expenses book and also gave him an idea of how he should reinvest in his shop to grow his business capacity. He leaves for work early morning and spends most of his day hard at work in his shop. The shop is now a very important source of income for Azram and an even more significant source of confidence for him. It makes him feel in control of his life and a valuable member of the family and the community. His shop also provides Azram with a platform for interacting with other people in the village. For Azram, who had abandoned all hope, being a source of inspiration for other people in the family and village is very encouraging. He hopes to continue working independently to grow his business in the near future.

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Tuck Shop
10. Glass Dolls

“You cannot play with us,” her cousin snapped back at her, snatching the doll out of Bushra’s hand. “But why not?” she asked, confused beyond words, “Aren’t we best friends?” Her cousins looked away from her. “No you are not. Not anymore! You cannot even play properly with me,” she answered back. Her comment made Bushra stop dead in her tracks. Was this all about that incident? Was her pain and suffering not enough? Did this mean that she was going to lose her friends too?

Had life just given her a confinement sentence without any fault of her own? How was any of this fair? For Bushra, her life had come to a halt eleven years ago. She had quickly realised, given the changing attitude of those around her that life was never going to be the same. She wondered why it made such a difference to others. How could their perception of her change overnight? Yes, she would never get her arm back. Yes, she would be slow in getting her work done. But did that mean that she was no longer human? Did it mean that she had suddenly also lost her ability to feel?

Bushra lost her left arm accidentally; aged 11, she had been playing with the fodder cutting machine. The machine had been turned off and there was no power in the house. She lost her forearm when the electricity arrived and the machine suddenly switched on. Bushra remembered nothing more than just a flash of pain as she fainted on the spot. The moment marked a turning point in her life. It left her physically and emotionally incapacitated. The changing perceptions of people that she had once called friends left her confused. It made her recovery harder; it made her feel inferior; it made her question the purpose of her life. She saw others around her living a full and complete life. They were all happy. They were busy with their own lives. She felt like she was the only person who had been ripped off a bright future. As the years went by, Bushra confined herself within her house. She stayed away from family gatherings and social events. She stayed at home looking after all the household chores, away from all the sympathetic looks. She became increasingly introverted and unable to communicate with other people confidently.

When CHIP discovered her, Bushra was still finding it difficult to grapple with her disability and how much her life had changed because of it. After a medical assessment, she was given forearm prosthesis and was helped in obtaining a disability certificate. This was complemented by counselling sessions that helped in boosting her confidence. The community mobiliser helped Bushra once again gain control of her life and bring about positive change in her life. She can now confidently express her feelings; she has begun to participate in family decisions. She has also become a CCB executive bodies’ member of the CCB Ladhwala. She actively participates in all meetings and social events. At the same time, awareness raising sessions were held at a village level which gave the general public primer into the importance of inclusion of persons with disabilities and their rights and responsibilities.

CHIP also assisted Bushra in setting up a ladies shop in her village. Simultaneously, she was given financial and business management training which has helped her maintain accounting books for her shop. The knowledge she gained during the training has taught her how to reinvest in her business through purchasing and selling and gradually grow the enterprise. After completing all her household chores, Bushra looks after the shop which alongside being her main source of income is also a means for her to be able to communicate with other women in the village. She has managed to make friends with other girls her age and often visits them after closing her shop for the day. Her ability to make something of herself has restored her confidence. It has also given her a strong position in her family allowing her to participate in family decision making.
11. Living in the Shadows

Mehboob had always lived life in the shadow of his eldest brother. There was a nagging sense of incapacity that would not go away. His disability of course, added to it all. He knew that his family thought him to be the black sheep of the family, incapable of doing much with his life. But was any of that his fault? Was he the one to be blamed? Was any of this within his control? Had he asked for any of this? Then why did he somehow deserve to be treated as a second class citizen as compared to his other siblings?

Mehboob’s eldest brother lived in Saudi Arabia and was the financial and emotional backbone of the family. No decision in the household was made without consulting him first. Mehboob on the other hand was his anti-thesis. He was not considered worthy of even an introduction when guests came to visit the family. He was asked to leave the living area and stay in his room until the guests were left. He would only ever be an obstruction.

Mehboob had been born with a speech and hearing impairment. Lack of resources had meant that his disability had escaped untreated and had only worsened over the years. Lack of education had meant that his relatives, including his parents and other siblings, barely even considered him a family member. And it was this indifference shown by people who are naturally supposed to love him unconditionally that completely shattered his confidence and ego. He stayed hidden in his room where he felt less of a burden on the household. He did not have any friends and he was barely able to communicate his feelings with his siblings. When he did have the fortune of meeting other people, he would sit quietly in a corner, shy and confused. He was unable to mingle with others his age. He would often look over and stare jealously at his brother and sisters and the ease with which they were able to interact with others. People actually wanted to talk to them. And look at him… no one cared. And nothing would be able to change that.

This was the condition that CHIP discovered him in. After a medical assessment, he was provided with hearing aid and help was available for him to obtain a disability certificate. He was also provided with speech therapy to help him communicate with others in the community. Alongside speech therapy, Mehboob was made to undertake trainings on disability rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstreaming, both of which added to his confidence. Awareness raising sessions were also conducted at village level which have helped in changing the perception of the local community. He is currently an active member of the local CCB, attending all monthly meetings and social activities. He thoroughly enjoys participating in the sports events organised by CHIP. Simultaneously, CHIP provided sign language lessons at CCB level which has gone a long way in minimising all communication difficulties for Mehboob. Very importantly, Mehboob was able to find his life partner with the help of friends that he made through the CCB. He is now happily married.

CHIP also helped Mehboob in attaining financial independence, a factor which played a very important role in his recovery. CHIP provided him with the capital to set up his own tailoring shop after providing him with vocational training on stitching. He was also provided with financial and business management training which has helped him maintain accounts for his shop and also taught him the basics of reinvesting in his shop. His day now begins at 9 o’clock sharp as he makes his way to the shop; he spends the whole day working hard to meet all of his customers needs. He is determined to see his business grow so that he too will be able to gain the respect of his family members. The shop has now become the main source of income for himself and he uses some of the profits to support his family members too. As he slowly gains his confidence to fight against his disability, Mehboob is becoming more and more motivated to help other persons with disabilities in the community by teaching them how to stitch.

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Mehboob Ahmed
12. Changing the Future

Shahida looked to her children: they looked so innocent playing amongst themselves on the veranda. Would she able to shield them away from the cruel world forever? Would she be able to give them all that they deserved? These questions plagued her mind day in, day out. She was genuinely worried about the future that she could give to her children. She knew that she could not rely on anyone else: not her husband, not her family. But the problem was she was not entirely sure whether she could rely on herself to give them the future they deserve either.

Shahida had been left hemiplegic, completely unable to use the left side of her body, with the onset of a disease. Her parents had been unable to afford any treatment for her and she had been left to deal with her disability on her own terms without any medical assistance. The disability also resulted in her leaving school, having completed only primary school. After her marriage, her problems only escalated. She now had her abusive in-laws and husband to deal with. Her husband was a drug addict and often inflicted her with physical and verbal abuse. Her mother-in-law was no help either, unconditionally defending her son and blaming Shahida for everything that was wrong with the family. As her condition worsened, she began to restrict her social activities, staying at home looking after her three children, keeping herself busy with household chores. But no matter how hard she tried to distract herself, she was unable to get her mind off what sort of future lay in store for her children. She knew that if nothing was done soon, they too would be sucked into the same vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy that she was caught in.

Shahida was bravely fighting all of her problems when she was discovered by CHIP. After a medical assessment of her condition, Shahida was provided with a knee-foot-ankle orthosis, a device that helped her physically support herself without assistance from others. The device helped in improving her mobility and also gave her the physical strength to bring about positive change in her life. She was also made to attend counselling and awareness raising sessions that reassured her that person with disability can also live a normal life like all others in the community. It was these sessions that gave her the confidence to be able to stand on her own two feet and begin to earn for her family. These sessions also facilitated her entry back into society giving her the confidence to communicate normally with others around her; it helped her emotionally overcome the mental obstacles that she had created for herself. Simultaneously, she was also given the opportunity to become a member of Ladhwala CCB. She actively participates in all CCB meetings and also gets involved in social events and gatherings.

CHIP also helped her set up a tuck shop – her main source of income and her lifeline. The shop is her way of proving to herself and all those who had ever doubted her that she could do something for herself and for her children despite her disability. The shop is her way of trying to change the future for her children, her way of trying to give them a better life than they currently have. CHIP provided her with all the necessary financial and business management trainings that have helped her in maintaining an incomes and expenses book. She not only singlehandedly manages the shop but also purchases the items for her shop on her own. She is determined more than ever to see her business expand. She has reinvested some of the income that she has earned from the shop and uses the remaining to support her family and pay for her children’s education. As she attained financial independence, her position within her family has also changed significantly. She is treated with more respect and dignity and plays an important decision making role in the family. The shop also provides her with a means of interacting with other women in society. She now has four friends which she often visits after closing the shop in the evening.