Stepping into the World of Vision

Case Studies of People with Blindness, Swabi, North West Frontier Province of Pakistan
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**About CHIP**
Initially a Swiss NGO Programme, Civil Society HID Programme (CHIP), became a value-led national HID support organization. It has been working for more than a decade in strengthening Civil Society Organizations working for the disadvantaged. CHIP’s scope of work places emphasis on Human and Institutional Development (HID). The rationale being that HID is the foundation of any development strategy. It provides the framework as well as the fuel for translating ideas into action. Everywhere, even when strategies are similar, the difference between success and failure is determined by how well people are prepared to achieve goals and how well their organizations are able to support them. Through its proven HID approach, CHIP improves and strengthens organizations at human, organizational and institutional levels to achieve programme efficiency and effectiveness.

**Our Vision**
An aware and organized society capable of realizing its own development.

**Our Mission**
To enable individuals and organizations to make more effective and efficient development efforts through the provision of value-led Human & Institutional Development (HID) services.

**Our Values**
Practice and promote honesty, dedication and commitment.
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A. Prologue

CHIP in partnership with Sightsavers International is implementing a project on ‘Promoting Social Inclusion for Persons with Blindness, Low Vision and other Disabilities’ in 42 villages of District Swabi of North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. The project aims to establish a model for ‘Community Based Rehabilitation’. Therefore the main approach of the project focuses on strengthening ‘Community Based Organizations’ in technical and social rehabilitation of people with blindness and other disabilities. Under this project CHIP intends to rehabilitate around 335 people with blindness & low vision.

The efforts, by CHIP, in this direction uncovered new avenues, new discourses and new paradigms. We unquestionably came up to the conclusion that stereotypes perceived earlier were more rigid than our anticipation and more challenging than we thought. But discovery into these new findings helped us a lot in understanding the present status of people with blindness. This enabled us to break the ice and take a step forward towards a new beginning.

We are proud of our efforts for joining hands with challenged people and understanding them. In this regard we found that lack of mobility among people with blindness is the biggest hindrance for their social inclusion, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan. Along with the awareness raising for attitudinal change in local communities, our teams provided technical trainings to several people with blindness on ‘Orientation and Mobility’ and ‘Activities of Daily Life’. These trainings proved to be quite successful and helped people with blindness to become an active part of our society. But a lot more needs to be done in this regard. We are firm in our endeavours to make people with blindness a part of our society. The present case studies are accounts of some of the people with blindness who went through our trainings.
B. Youth 13-18 Years

B1. Daring to Live - Abdullah
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B1. Daring to Live - Abdullah

Abdullah, a 15 year old boy, is resident of village Jalbhai, District Swabi. He is memorizing the Holy Quran in a local madrassah.

Abdullah wants to see the colours and spectrum of life. Blindness is hereditary in his family as his late father and a brother are also blind. He wants to play like other children do. He enjoys running. He likes his madrassah and wants to be a religious scholar. Abdullah is of the opinion that he cannot handle school education and the madrassah’s rigorous routine at the same time.

Blindness has bereft Abdullah of all the fun and happiness of early childhood and adolescence. He faces all sorts of hardships in and outside his home. He depends a great deal on his mother who looks after him.

Abdullah has never been exposed to any kind of training to reduce his dependency on others as a blind person. He had not even heard of it prior to the CHIP training. He is a good learner and is happy with the master trainers’ help that is making him learn novel techniques about body protection and safe mobility with the White Cane.

CHIP training has made Abdullah capable of taking assistance from Sighted Guide. He can now hold the hand of Sighted Guide in an exact manner and can also maintain an appropriate distance between himself and the guide. He also feels more confident in walking with the guide, taking assistance in sitting and determining face direction.

Trainings have also provided him with Self Protection Techniques and that’s why he is now capable of protecting the lower portion of his body. Abdullah is also using White Cane and in this regard he is well capable of holding the cane in the right manner. Though he still needs to work on his arm position and the proper use of White Cane by maintaining feet and tip coordination.

The training has enhanced his confidence manifold. He is learning new ways to cope with the difficulties of life. His self-esteem has improved a great deal. He is excited about the training and wants to learn more things.
B2. Relishing the Beauty of Life - Murad Ali

A young boy of about 13 starts off by singing a romantic song ‘Woh Larki Bauhat Yaad Aati Hai’ (I Miss That Girl Badly) from an Indian film. He tells us that he is in love with this song. When asked if he can also relate to the song, the young lad blushed. Murad Ali does not remember his age. All we know that when he was two years of age he lost his eyes due to an unforeseen illness. He is the youngest among three siblings—one brother and two sisters—who are his centre of happiness. He wants to play with his friends all the time. Murad Ali lives with his parents and grandparents.

Since Murad Ali’s learning is in process, at this stage he has improved quite a bit in the Sighted Guide Techniques. Now, he can take help from a Sighted Guide in a pleasant way; he is comfortable in hand grip and keeping distance between himself and Sighted Guide i.e. switching sides, going down stairs, sitting on a chair, determining face direction and going through narrow spaces. Murad Ali has also learnt some of the Self Protection Techniques such as upper body protection, lower body protection and trailing. He is in the process of learning full body protection, searching lost objects and direction taking. Murad Ali has also learnt the usage of White Cane to a considerable level. Now he is able to grip White Cane in an easy way and he is much better in touch techniques. Murad Ali is gradually learning arm positioning, diagonal technique and bringing about feet and tip coordination.

The greatest change Murad Ali has observed in his life after going through trainings is his recent admission to a school named Government Institute of Blind. He is really enjoying this new beginning of life—the life of hope. Murad Ali has made new friends at school and his health and psychological conditions have improved dramatically. His teachers cannot help but comment on how Murad Ali is a bright child and is learning things very quickly.

Murad Ali’s parents are really happy to see this new change in his life. Earlier they had feared that Murad Ali would get completely isolated and would spend a resigned life but now they are hopeful about his future and determined to facilitate him to the fullest to spend a joyful social life.

Murad Ali proudly says that he can eat by himself and can go to market without anybody accompanying him. Because of new learnt techniques, Murad Ali is optimistic about his future and he adamantly feels that this newly begun educational career has opened for him new ways of learning and enjoying life with a bright future ahead.
B3. Respect Me for Living Life - Ambreen

Ambreen is a 16 year old girl, native of village Maneray Baala of District Swabi; she is single and lives in a joint family.

She was a child when she and her brother both fell seriously ill. They had severe headaches, vomiting and fever, and after the illness, she turned blind. Her parents took her to many doctors but nothing helped and she never recovered her eye sight. Doctors told them that water had accumulated in Ambreen’s head and so her eyesight will never return. She has been deprived of her eye sight for the last 5 years. Ambreen’s paternal aunt, Wahad Zari is also blind.

Ambreen feels bad about what she has lost due to blindness. “I don’t work much… I like to study… I wish there was some school for girls like me, where we could also read and understand what all other girls and boys can… I could only read up to third grade.”

Ambreen participated in the training with indomitable interest. She is now practicing Sighted Guide Techniques more confidently. She feels much more protected after learning Self Protection Techniques. White Cane has brought her joys of independence and now she moves around with a shine on her face.

What has been overlooked and might be a good idea to work on in the future is awareness campaigns regarding how and in what manner impaired people, in particular women should be treated. We felt the need for such campaigns when we came across comments as the one given by Ambreen:

“On Eid days I went to my maternal uncle’s house. I don’t take White Cane with me when I go to other relatives houses except my uncle. People talk and pass comments… and I don’t like them… I do use it at home though… my uncles’ daughters at home are my best friends… they understand my problem…”
B4. A Singing Heart - Farahnaaz

Farahnaaz is a 15 year old girl living with her parents, seven brothers and two sisters in Saleem Khan Village of Swabi District. She is suffering from blindness since birth.

Farahnaaz is considered mentally ill by her family. They also think she is controlled by invisible forces that live inside her and talk in her place at times. Her eyes are red and flies keep getting attracted towards them and sit on them. Her parents are not related to each other and no body in her family has ever had such a disease. Her father said: “We can’t think of anyone with blindness in either side of our families…but in any case…these trainings are very helpful…but Farahnaaz is mentally unstable… I wonder if she can ever get better… however…she is good enough as far as her own things of interest are concerned…”

Farahnaaz loves to sing. She wants to learn more and become a singer. She sang three beautiful songs for us. Her voice is magical. She filled the gaps between the lines with a humming tune. Her brother has taught her how to sing. Her father welcomes the idea of her becoming a professional singer.

“I get up very early, very early…then I drink tea…and then I roam around inside the house…Nazuka (The CHIP Master Trainer) has taught me how to open and close the White Cane and I do that many times during the day…and then I walk with it…it is very good… it helps…I can walk…. That is why I love Nazuka…”

The CHIP Master Trainer has visited her 14 times and has trained her in techniques such as lower body protection, upper body protection, proper sitting method, using walls as support, finding something lost on the floor, etc.

Farahnaaz told us a story:
“There were two parrots… they were very close friends…one day the female parrot said to the male parrot that he has never taken her out…he has never taken her to show her the rivers… the mountains…the gardens… the animal…” in the middle of the story… she stopped and said: “I can’t see all these either…”

But she doesn’t let her deprivation last for a long time. The idea of using White Cane brings her joy and it is filling her with optimism to become self-reliant in the near future.
B5. I have Vision That Gives Light – Muhammad Riaz

“My blindness can not bar me to be a known lawyer” said this resolute and determined young boy of 16 years named Muhammad Riaz. Son of a farmer, Riaz is studying in class 5th of Government Institute of Blind. He has two brothers and his eldest brother too is living with blindness.

“It’s not from God but by the malpractice of health professionals that pushed me in utter blindness.” Riaz gave an account of how he developed blindness. He told with mellow face that in 1996 his eyes were itching and he went to a local doctor who gave him an ointment to be applied into his eyes. No sooner did he use the ointment; he felt burning in his eyes as well as sharply decreasing vision. His family took him to Peshawar for treatment but all in vain. Eventually he became irreversibly blind.

“Sudden deprivation of light of the world had plunged my whole life into fathomless darkness.” Riaz told that he was studying in class 3 in a local mainstream school before he became blind. As he got blind, he faced sarcastic remarks and jokes by his mischievous fellows in the school. Feeling discouraged by his teachers and school fellows he had to discontinue his studies. However, after a while he once again took up the courage and persuaded his family to get him admitted into the Government Institute of Blind (GIB).

Riaz feels that re-initiation of his studies has given him new light to envision his future as an empowered citizen of his society. In GIB, he also had opportunity to get trainings on orientation and mobility, activities of daily life and personal hygiene to live a life with lesser dependence on others. He told us that the master trainers and social organizer of CHIP have motivated and helped shape his vision for future studies. He is determined and resolute to continue his studies. After completing elementary classes in GIB, he intends to go to Al-Makhtoom Institute of Blind in Islamabad for continuation of his studies. After completion of his secondary education he aspires to join International Islamic University to get law education. “I intend to learn a lot because I want to serve back to my fellows who are facing hardships and discouragement because of their disabilities.”
B6. I Am A Resolute Youth…Don’t Ridicule Me - Dilshaad

Dilshaad doesn’t have any idea of her exact age but she thinks it should roughly be somewhere above 18 years. Dilshad is single and lives with her parents. She is native of village Sheikh Jana. She has been suffering from blindness since 15 years. Her father is a farmer and one of her brothers is also blind.

Dilshaad takes part in simple household work. She almost burned herself one day after which she doesn’t engage in anything that involved fire. She washes clothes, but still gets complaints from her brother and father that the clothes are not well washed. She is good with dusting though, as well as feeding the animals and milking the cows.

It seemed that Dilshaad developed an interest in the training for serving her father and brother. Whatever the case might be, she proved herself to be a good learner. She is quite efficient in using Sighted Guide Techniques and is struggling only in drainage line crossing. The much needed Self Protection Techniques proved highly beneficial for Dilshaad. Now, with the new practices, she is better able to avoid any mishap since she is confidently following techniques of body protection, searching for lost object, trailing and direction taking. Dilshaad is also using White Cane and it is raising her level of confidence as she feels more independent and expressive.

Dilshaad is not happy with the way she is treated by those around her.

“People laugh at me when they see me with the White Cane…they pass comments like ‘look at that old woman…’ it makes me feel embarrassed… that is why I try not to take the White Cane and take help from my sister…”

Dilshaad likes the trainings overall, but she is suspicious about her ability to learn.

“I like the training… I think it should continue further…I need to learn more…I am not a very intelligent girl… I can hardly learn… I don’t go to school but I wish I could have ever gone…I haven’t even read Quran… my father doesn’t let me go to the religious school… he wants me to be at home all the time.”

After receiving the trainings, if nothing else, she has managed to come up to the expectations of her brother and father as well as other family members as far as house chores are concerned. She performs them with far more ease, which is pleasant not only for her, but for the rest of family as well. However, what she wishes for is more comfort, help and support from her family members, relatives, neighbours as well as CHIP trainers.
C. Women 35-65

C7. Enjoy Colours of Life – Anwar Shaida
C8. Cheering Friendship – Bakht Meena
C9. Impossible? You Are Not that Bad – Raftania
C10. Wish to See myself Just one – Salma
C11. It’s not the End of Life – Gharibun Nisa
C7. Enjoying Colours of Life - Anwar Shaida

Anwar Shaida is a 40 year old single lady living with her mother. She is an inhabitant of village Kalu Khan District Swabi. Her brother is married but he doesn’t live with them, so they are practically without any bread earner. They live a very poor life, residing in somebody else’s house because their own house is too shabby and needs renovation which they don’t have enough resources for. They have been trying to manage to get some loan but all their efforts are in vain. Their mere subsistence depends on the charity from the villagers.

She is blind since she was five years old and never went to a school or Madrassah. At the age of five she got seriously ill with severe fever, headache and pain in eyes. Eventually she turned blind. Anwar Shaida never got married.

As Anwar Shaida has been blind for the past thirty-five years, it is quite apparent that her habits are mature now and she manages things in self-assumed ways. Acquainting her with the right techniques will not be an easy task.

Being a frivolous woman, Anwar Shaida eagerly attended trainings. Her determination is well depicted in her performance. After learning Sighted Guide Techniques, Anwar Shaida can now confidently walk with the Sighted Guide by holding his/her hand while keeping suggested distance between herself and the Sighted Guide. She can satisfactorily switch sides, go up and down stairs, sit, hint out face direction and pass through narrow spaces. Still facing some difficulties, Anwar Shaida can turn, pass through door ways and can cross drainage lines.

Having knowledge of Self Protection Techniques, she can protect her upper and lower body, trail, carry out a search for lost objects and can determine direction. Though Anwar Shaida faces some hardships, she can still carry out full body protection.

She reasonably learnt using the White Cane and can now appropriately grip it and use it for touching objects in her way. With some hard work she manages to bring her arm in the right position, can walk on an uneven path and can manage good coordination of feet and tip of the cane for smooth and safe walking.

“I must say that the training I have been getting from CHIP has helped me gain confidence about myself and now I want to feel the world outside my house.... And I want to visit neighbours and villagers....” The feeling of visiting her neighbours is natural and reflects that Anwar Shaida is gaining confidence. However, socialization in case of poor communities, particularly in women, is directly linked with economic standing.
C8. Cheering Friendships - Bakht Meena

“I am old and my brain doesn’t work anymore…” she said that while hiding her smiling face with her hands. “I don’t know if I would ever learn but of course I would like to learn skills such as sewing…”

Bakht Meena is a 45 year old married woman with seven children, living in village Thand Koe of District Swabi. She has one sister and two brothers. She got married when she was fifteen years old, nearly twenty years ago. Bakht Meena’s one son and one daughter are married and the rest live with her. She doesn’t suffer from complete blindness. Her sight can only differentiate between light and dark. But for the last five to six years she is having serious problems with her eyes. She has also been suffering regularly from severe headaches that sometimes last for hours. She has been treated several times, and doctors have suggested an operation as the only treatment, but she refused to go for the operation being scared of the after effects.

A lady of mature age with family commitment Bakht Meena still showed a positive attitude for learning mobility techniques once she was in training. In Sighted Guide Techniques, she can now satisfactorily hold the arm of the Sighted Guide in right the position, keep the right amount of distance between herself and the guide, walk with the guide, switch sides, go down stairs, determine face direction and pass through narrow spaces. Of Self Protection Techniques, Bakht Meena can satisfactorily protect her upper and lower body. She can trail, search lost objects and can determine direction line. In White Cane usage, she can satisfactorily grip the White Cane and feel objects in her way by touching them with the tip of the White Cane.

Bakht Meena used to visit her neighbours once in a while to spend some time with them and tell them what was going on in her life. The training from CHIP has enabled her to visit them more often as now she can take support from the wall, can walk easily with Sighted Guide Technique and can also go by her own using the White Cane. In response her neighbours have also increased their visits and now they enjoy talking to her much more than before. They are curious about how Bakht Meena has managed to learn new techniques. Bakht Meena is happy that now she can serve them better at her home because now she can manage house chores better than before. Now she can also visit her brother’s home and that is where her White Cane is really helpful as her brother’s home is a bit further away than her neighbourhood friends but the newly learnt techniques help her get there. That is a real joy. Her smile reached her eyes when she was talking about her brothers and sisters.
Raftania is a 65 year old woman living in Thand Koe Village of Swabi. She is single and not blind by birth. At the age of six, she was hit by severe fever and chicken pox. She started suffering from blindness afterwards. She has only two sisters and no brothers at present. Her only brother was murdered. One of the severest pains that Raftania has felt in her entire life is the pain caused by the loss of the only brother she ever had.

Raftania has no hope in learning anything from the training. She considers the trainings useful, but not for herself. She finds the training methods too difficult to remember and thus impossible to implement in her daily life.

While acknowledging the hard work of the CHIP Master Trainer, she stated her inability to learn:

“The Master Trainer has been working hard… she came to see me for almost 20 days regularly… she didn’t miss a day… she has lots of patience… but am too old to learn now… nothing seems to be working out for me.”

“My family also tried a lot to make me remember the training skills… but I can’t remember so can’t learn… if I ever I go out, I take help from a Sighted Guide, this perhaps is the only skill I applied, but that is something I am used to for the last 60 years.”

“I am too old… I can’t learn. I can’t remember any thing… I don’t have a good sense of reason… I have been falling down here and there and that is because I don’t remember what CHIP Master Trainer teaches me…”

However, when observed while practicing learned Orientation and Mobility Techniques, it was found that Raftania is not that bad a learner as she thinks she is. Perhaps in the present state of mind she is thinking that there is no use of training at such an old age. Our next task is to help her in changing her thinking into a more positive one.
C10. Wish to See Myself Just Once - Salma

Salma, a resident of village Yar Hussain is 18 years old. She has one brother. When Salma and her brother reached their childhood, a tragic incident occurred that changed the whole course of their lives. Her father did not like Salma’s mother and married another woman. He also left Salma and her family helpless. At this stage Salma’s brother was the only support to earn a living for them and subsequently started working as a labourer.

With the passage of time, Salma and her family survived but her mother’s sudden death gave another tragic blow to their lives. After sometime Salma’s brother got married. As her Bhabi’s (sister-in-law) behaviour was very rigid towards Salma so they tried to get rid of Salma by getting her married at the age of 15 with one of their maternal relatives.

Salma in 15 years of age came to a new home and started her married life with Niaz Muhammad. Her husband and mother-in-law are very loving, caring and co-operative. “Life is not the bed of roses,” and “when miseries come they come not alone but in battalions”. On the 7th day of her marriage she suffered from typhoid. She recovered from typhoid but she felt that she couldn’t see clearly. She was brought to Peshawar Hospital for check up and then to Shah Mansoor Eye Hospital Swabi but all in vain. Eventually, she became totally blind just after 7 months of her marriage.

She told that this event affected her so much that she wished to die and did not want to live in this dark world any more. However CHIP became a beckon of light in the dark ocean of her life. The master trainer trained her in sighted-guide techniques, self-protection techniques, use of white cane and searching lost objects. Now, she is very much satisfied with this training because it has improved her mobility and independent living within and outside the family.

Now she can wash clothes, utensils and takes good care of herself, along with her husband, “Black and red are my favourite colours in dresses. I love to wear nose-ring. Salma shared that she still remembered her wedding dress. The image of her husband face is permanently alive in her mind and can’t forget her marriage ceremony but “I wish to see just once myself that how I look like now and what changes have occurred on my face?“

Salma aspires for a better future but have apprehensions in her mind that it’s not possible to be fulfilled. Likewise her husband wishes to become a father and Salma would love to have children too. She feels that she is not ready for this big step yet but she is confident that with more training, she will be better prepared for motherhood. She looks forward to having her children and leading a happily married life.
C11. Its Not the End of Life - Gharib-un-Nisa

It is said that one’s name often affects one’s life. This seems to be true in case of a 42 years old woman with blindness, Gharib-un-Nissa (which means a poor woman). Gharib-un-Nissa is living in village Shah Mansoor of District Swabi. She has 3 sisters and 3 brothers. One of her brother is disabled. Gharib-un-Nissa got married to her cousin when she was only 14 years old. Her husband works as a labourer. She has 4 children; one son and 3 daughters. She was living a satisfactory life but after eight years she faced a problem in her left eye and started loosing her sight. She visited a number of doctors and hospitals located in Swabi, Mardan, Charsadda, Taxila and Rawalpindi for check up and treatment and even got her eyes operated on in Sherpoa Hospital Peshawar. However the operation turned out to be unsuccessful and resultantly nothing worked to regain her sight.

She underwent another trauma when her husband left her due to her blindness and married another woman. Now Gharib-un-Nissa is living with her old mother and a disabled brother. Her only son was sent to jail for committing a crime. She has no source of income and is living in extreme poverty. These miseries coupled with blindness had shattered her psychological and physical well being.

Trainings by CHIP have brought a good and positive change in her life. After going through trainings in activities of daily living, orientation and mobility, self growth sessions and personal hygiene she is now capable to move around easily. Sighted Guide Techniques has improved her mobility. "Master trainer has helped me enough to do my domestic duties properly. I enjoy listening to Islamic cassettes given by CHIP and feels happy to know about religion".

Gharibun Nisa told us that she hated leading a dependent life and wanted sound health so that she could pray and recite the Holy Quran and never become a burden on others. Now she has a small shop in her home for selling soap, threads, detergents, dandasa, miswak, chips, biscuits, sweets, and mehndi with bangles especially on Eid. She feels very happy when people come and buy things from her as it’s the only source of her livelihood. She feels that people are now very supportive and respectful towards her.

Gharib-un-Nisa lives a very poor life but she says, "It’s not the end of life and hopes for the best".
D. Men 26-65 years

D12. Learning to Teach Others – Asif Ali
D13. Knowledge is Empowerment – Shamraiz Khan
D14. Wanting Things to Be Changed – Faqir Taj
D15. Hey! I love My White Cane Now – She Nabi
D16. Earning for Life Again – Azam Khan
D17. No More Worries – Shair Khan
D18. A Visionary Entrepreneur – Pervaiz Muhammad
D12. Learning To Teach Others - Asif Ali

Asif Ali, resident of village Anbar District Swabi, is a 26 year old married man with two daughters and a son. He imparts religious education to children at a madrassah. Asif Ali memorized the Holy Quran at the age of nine. Asif Ali is respected by people around him for being a hafiz (learner of the Quran).

It is interesting to note how the failure of formal educational system is leading the poor and downtrodden to send their children to religious schools. That is the only place where they can learn for free, and also get shelter and food. For children with blindness, neglected by society at large, the madrassah system provides at least some kind of systematic learning. Asif Ali, too, was sent to a madrassah at a very young age. He now teaches other children. Studying the Quran and giving dars (religious lecture) to young children is his fulltime occupation. It keeps him busy and gives him a purpose to live for.

As a responsible person and breadearner of his family, Asif Ali started attending training sessions keeping in mind its usefulness for his practical life. Now he is practically benefiting from all the techniques he learnt. He takes assistance from the Sighted Guide in a friendly manner; he holds the hand of Sighted Guide without causing him discomfort and keeps an appropriate distance when walking with him. Asif Ali has improved his techniques in performing other activities while walking with the Sighted Guide; these activities include switching sides, going up stairs, sitting, determining face direction and getting through narrow spaces.

Now, Asif Ali is better than before in Self Protection. He has better command over upper body protection and lower body protection; he can manageably trail and identify which direction he is facing. In the White Cane usage, Asif Ali now grips the cane properly; he also brings his arm in the right position and uses touch techniques. He demonstrates a few and is happy with his performance.

“My problems have lessened after this training,” remarks Asif Ali. “I am thankful to my trainer, Abzar, for teaching me. He has taught me how to use a White Cane, look for a fallen or lost object, and sit on a chair properly.”

He says that his family’s attitude towards him is respectful. He regrets the fact that despite wanting to perform certain difficult tasks, he is unable to do so because of his blindness.

Asif Ali further said “I am interested in learning technical skills so that I can earn something from working at home. I hope CHIP can teach me how to make a chair. I would love to impart this knowledge to others so that they can stand up on their feet.”
“I am a trainer myself. It is like training a trainer. CHIP is doing a wonderful job by empowering people with blindness like us. Once I am fully trained, I will be able to train ten other people with blindness. Once I am empowered, I will empower hundreds and thousands.” With passion to help other people with blindness, Shamraiz attended training with great zeal. He is one of the few who masterly learnt all the techniques.

Shamraiz Khan is 28 years old, and is basically from Kashmir and presently residing in village Manari of District Swabi. “I never felt depressed about my blindness until my father remarried. My father did not care for me, and my stepmother was cruel...that was when for the first time in my life I felt I could not see,” narrates a mournful Khan.

The stepmother and her family were harsh on Khan, so he started contemplating leaving Kashmir. On his friend’s advice Khan went to Raiwand’s Tableeghi Ijtimaa (religious congregation) to find solace in a religious congregation. Khan says that for the first time he met so many people from all over the country and from all walks of life. It enhanced his confidence and interpersonal skills. There he befriended a person from Swabi who advised him to move to his city.

What difficulties did he face prior to the CHIP training? “It was always a problem to search things. Some times I would also bang my head into a wall because I was unaware of the body protection techniques,” tells Khan.

Shamraiz fully learnt the Sighted Guide Techniques such as arm grip, to keep appropriate distance between himself and the Sighted Guide, walking with the guide, turning, switching sides, going up and down stairs, sitting and determining face direction.

Shamraiz is equally good in Self Protection Techniques such as upper body protection, lower body protection, full body protection and trailing. Now he can also search lost objects and can determine the direction of where he is going.

Shamraiz likes to play cricket; he is determined to open up a Cricket Club in Swabi. He is passionate and enthusiastic about doing social work and helping other people with blindness.
Faqir Taj is a 35 year old living with his wife, two sons and a daughter in village Jalbhai of District Swabi. He is partially blind and only sees blurred images. Because of his impaired vision he is not able to work, thus living in extreme poverty. Due to his blindness, Taj could never see the face of a school but he wants his children to be educated. One of his sons is about to be enrolled in a local school.

Taj stoically accepts his blindness as God’s prudence. Due to the fact that like most other men and women with blindness of his locality, he could not acquire a proper education, Taj has also resigned to religion. The local madrassah is the hub of villagers’ social activities as well as a learning centre in the absence of government schools.

Though Taj faced difficulties in learning from trainings, he showed visible improvement. In terms of using the Sighted Guide Techniques, he can now properly hold onto the arm of the Sighted Guide and can keep the appropriate distance between himself and the Guide. When it comes to the Self Protection Technique, Taj can now better protect his lower body better. Use of the White Cane is something entirely new for Taj, yet he can grip it properly.

Taj can easily do household chores and can also commute to the market without anyone’s support. He admits, though, that prior to this training, the likelihood of his running into a wall or something else was quite high. Before training, he had never used a White Cane or a stick. He would falter and would sometimes injure himself while trying to stand up. Now, after training, he can protect himself better than before and all that he has learnt is adding value to his life bit by bit.

Taj finds the CHIP training extremely beneficial as it has shown him ways to use the White Cane. He finds the cane a bit difficult to use but understands its value as well. Taj says that he does not use the White Cane at home but takes it along when he has to go to the market.

Taj’s life revolves around his home and village. He has never travelled outside of Swabi. He has a great desire to see things as normal people do, and wants his eyes to be medically examined. For him, life is not easy. But like most of his fellow villagers, he wants things to be changed.

Is it not his right to explore the world?
Hey! I Love My White Cane Now - Sher Nabi

He is so inspired by the CHIP training that he wants to open up a training centre for people with blindness. “I want to impart this training to others. I don’t want people with blindness to beg on the streets. They should live a dignified life like others. What is their fault if they are suffering from blindness?” he questions.

Sher Nabi is 50 years old and has five school-going children. He himself is Matriculate. After attaining a Matriculation, he started working in a garment factory. After losing his sight, he lost his job.

Nabi laments that the attitude of his family and relatives changed drastically after his blindness, and some people considered him to be a burden.

Nabi was trained by an association five years ago where he learnt handicraft and received vocational training. CHIP’s training is a new beginning for him which he is utilizing efficiently.

Sher Nabi fantastically learnt how to take help from the Sighted Guide Techniques and is one of the few who learnt it so perfectly. He can superbly hold the hand of the Sighted Guide causing not even a bit of discomfort; he masterly keeps appropriate distance between himself and the Sighted Guide while walking and standing with him. Sher Nabi is equally good in turning and knowing face direction. Other Sighted Guide Techniques which he practices efficiently include switching sides, going up and down stairs, sitting and getting through narrow spaces. He seriously needs to work on passing through door ways and crossing drainage lines.

After going through training, Sher Nabi can protect his upper and lower body. He considerably improved in techniques of trailing and direction taking. Now, he can remarkably hold the cane in a perfect way. He is improving in positioning his arm, using touch techniques and making suitable coordination between his feet and the tip of the cane.

In the beginning Sher Nabi was hesitant to use the White Cane but dramatic change has been observed in his attitude, as now he is not only using the White Cane, but is also resolute on not depending on anybody else and solely using the White Cane for his mobility. This change has improved his life. Furthermore, Sher Nabi is actively participating in CHIP theatrical performances for awareness raising among communities regarding people with blindness. In this capacity he is writing scripts, acting and directing theatre performances. This is exactly the sort of attitudinal change CHIP emphasises on for rehabilitation of people with blindness and other disabilities.
“Though living with blindness yet I am actively earning for my family,” said Mr. Azam Khan emphatically (alias Zailum Khan). I used to have a number of skills such as farming, making ropes for ox and buffalos and most notably boring shallow wells. But all of these skills became useless for me and my family when I lost eyesight of both of my eyes two years ago.”

Mr. Azam Khan who is 50 years old is living in village Takhat Banday, Union Council Kalu Khan of District Swabi. He had eight children out of which 2 are married. Azam Khan lost vision of his left eye some 40 years ago. His right eye also had low vision. However, he learnt boring of wells and started earning for his family. Two years ago he got his right eye injured while cutting fuel wood for his family. His eye was operated but one day while digging a well, he was pulling out a pipe. He suddenly felt intense pain in the back of his head. He got fever afterwards and ultimately lost sight in his second eye. He was appalled at this sudden loss of very precious last source of light and sight. Living in sadness and melancholy, he did not see the point of going outside. He considered himself useless and felt miserable. He also became angry towards his family. When he got too depressed, he would shout at his children. Since he didn’t walk inside and outside his house for around 3 months, his knees started aching. He realized that he should walk regularly to avoid pain in his knees. So he started going for Friday prayers and to village shops with the support of his younger son.

In February 2008, he saw new prospects in life when Mr. Muhammad Arif (Master Trainer) came to his house. Mr. Arif told him that people with blindness can live as normal a life as a sighted person does. “He gave me examples of some other people with blindness who were working at high positions. I told him that I just want to work again but also questioned him as to how is it possible without eyesight. Mr. Arif started coming to my home regularly. He convinced me to get training on how to move independently with the support of the white cane inside and outside my home. After completion of this training I knew how to manage daily life activities. He also encouraged me to restart my work. Then I started working in the fields and have also re-started repairing of bore wells. I started going to adjacent villages for repairing of bore wells of different people to earn my livelihood.”

“The trainings apparently did not bring any direct cash to me but they helped me earn a living again,” said Mr. Azam Khan with a face glittering with hope and happiness. “Now I need nothing except happy marriages of my children”
D17. No More Worries - Shair Khan

“You see, I can easily cut my nails and I do it regularly.” said Shair Khan with a joyful face. Shair Khan a 65 year old man is living in village Raih Union Council Yaar Hussain. He told us that he was bestowed with normal eyesight but in 1960 his eyesight suddenly and sharply started getting weaker. He was farming in his village and rarely went outside. But to get treatment for his eyesight problem, he went to Peshawar and Taxila. By 1965, he developed low vision and then it started getting lower day by day. Some 26 years ago he was told by the doctors of Shifa International Hospital, Rawalpindi that he was now an irreversibly blind person.

“Absolute and irreversible blindness had plunged me deep into darkness and despair.” Shair Khan said this with a melancholic tone. Shair Khan is married and has 3 children. He told us that soon after getting totally blind, he stopped interacting with people outside his immediate family. This attitude had developed a cynic attitude in him. He used to feel as if everyone was laughing at his fate – his fate of blindness.

After a few months of seclusion and pessimism, he took courage to go to the mosque for prayer and to seek internal light and serenity. He used to walk through the wall or with the support of his only son. After some days he also started going to the village Hujra (a communal place) at some special occasion of communal meeting.

“Whenever I tried to go outside independently I always got injured either through dog bite or smashing my head against any wall or tree and also by falling in drains.” There had been many such occasions. He always felt discouraged to go outside his home independently.

“Khalid Khan (Master Trainer) has brought new rays of hope and light in my life.” Mr. Shair said, “Khalid Khan came to me two years ago and started convincing me to get some training. After showing some reluctance, I started learning new skills of how to move inside and outside my home while protecting upper and lower body with and without a sighted guide.” Khalid Khan also trained me on how to keep myself neat and clean by cutting my nails, bathing, changing clothes and brushing my teeth regularly. He also learnt to use the white cane. He said, “White cane has turned to be my eyes now. I can now go into other villages. For the first time I have come to CBO office which is half a kilo meter away from my house.”
D18. A Visionary Entrepreneur - Pervaiz Muhammad

Can any body ever imagine that a person with irreversible blindness is running his own shop independently? “Yes, I am doing it”, said Pervaiz Muhammad with a smiling and confident face. Pervaiz Muhammad, 46 years old is a resident of village Sheikh Janan, District Swabi. “My hands are my eyes now, you see. I can recognize any Pakistani Rupee note just with my hands. I am not dependent on any one to count for me or measure and weigh goods for me. I can do it all on my own. I now independently purchase fruits and vegetables from Shewa wholesale market to sell at my shop in Swabi. However, it was not as easy some two years ago.”

Pervaiz was 18 years old when he suddenly got blind. His sudden blindness had sunk him deep into despair and dejection. His family took him for treatment everywhere from Peshawar to Karachi but he was unable to regain light in his eyes. After some years of futile strife he accepted the stark reality of his irreversible blindness.

His father had a grocery shop where he used to sit just to kill time. However the death of his father put new responsibilities on his shoulders. He decided to manage and continue the grocery shop to earn his livings and support his younger brother in continuing his studies. However he did not dare to go to the market himself to purchase goods for his shop. His younger brother used to support him. However, he often got worried when he thought about what would happen if his brother left for higher education or a job in any other city. Who would then buy goods for his shop?

In 2007 a master trainer from a local organization came to visit him. They convinced and motivated him to get some trainings on safe mobility and orientation about the external environment and the areas. He also gave Pervaiz a white cane. The trainings and white cane boosted his morale and confidence to move outside his own community. Finally he took up the courage to go to the whole sale market to purchase goods himself. After some problems in the beginning he developed good relationships with the wholesalers and transporters and started shopping for his shop independently.

When asked, what does he need now? He replied “I see my life quite fulfilled. However I only wish to marry because I need a companion to share my feelings and emotions. I also want to expand my business by seeking a loan for purchasing a variety of goods in bulk and employing one sales man for my shop”.

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