

Habitat Scroll of Honour Award 2007

Nomination Form

Once again, UN-HABITAT is pleased to invite you to submit your entry for the 2007 awards. Habitat Scroll of Honour awards are for initiatives which have made outstanding contributions to human settlements development and improving the quality of life in cities and communities around the world. Since its inception in 1989 submissions from over 80 countries have been received with over 110 individuals, projects and institutions having received the awards.

Nominations For: Projects Individual Organizations

Name of Individual/Project/Organization:

Lt. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed, Deputy Chairman, Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA)

Names of Person/s in charge:

Nominee Details

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Actions or Areas of Human Settlements:

- Response to natural disaster
- Risk reduction

- Sustainable relief
- Housing policy
- Land rights
- Building material and technology
- Community development
- Gender
- Internally displaced

Human Settlements Achievements:

Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed, Deputy Chairman ERRA, has demonstrated a capacity to positively shape and influence the lives of millions of people following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. His exceptional understanding of allowing the affected population take the lead in rebuilding their homes has contributed tremendously towards the unprecedented speed and rate of reconstruction of private housing in post earthquake Pakistan. The flexibility and innovation he has shown in championing creative new ideas throughout the development of the ERRA housing and landless policies and their implementation, demonstrates tremendous leadership and vision. His constant concern for the construction of earthquake resistant housing and associated disaster mitigation measures shows his capacity to address immediate needs while ensuring longer term development objectives. His extraordinary concern for issues such as social protection, vulnerability and gender underlines his humanitarian instincts in the face of many pressing priorities.

The nomination of Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed for the Habitat Scroll of Honour will acknowledge outstanding post-disaster leadership in supporting 3.5 million people in Pakistan to rebuild safer homes and restart their lives.

Nominator Details

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Nomination for the 2007 Habitat Scroll of Honour

Nomination by UN-HABITAT Pakistan:
Deputy Chairman Earthquake Reconstruction Rehabilitation Authority
Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed

Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed, Deputy Chairman ERRA, has demonstrated a capacity to positively shape and influence the lives of millions of people following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. His exceptional understanding of allowing the affected population take the lead in rebuilding their homes has contributed tremendously towards the unprecedented speed and rate of reconstruction of private housing in post earthquake Pakistan. The flexibility and innovation he has shown in championing creative new ideas throughout the development of the ERRA housing and landless policies and their implementation, demonstrates tremendous leadership and vision. His constant concern for the construction of earthquake resistant housing and associated disaster mitigation measures shows his capacity to address immediate needs while ensuring longer term development objectives. His extraordinary concern for issues such as social protection, vulnerability and gender underlines his humanitarian instincts in the face of many pressing priorities.

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1. LEADING THE RESPONSE TO THE OCTOBER 8TH EARTHQUAKE

On 8 October 2005, an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude struck the northern parts of Pakistan with devastating impact. The scale of the disaster was considerable: 73,338 people lost their lives, 62,412 were seriously injured, 3.5 million people homeless, 6,440 km of roads were damaged, 6,298 schools and 796 health facilities were devastated. The total area affected was 30,000 sq km of mountainous and extremely challenging terrain.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to co-ordinate the implementation of the recovery and reconstruction in all earthquake affected districts in North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PaK) in all sectors, including the reconstruction of housing.

Lt. General Nadeem Ahmed was tasked by the President of Pakistan to lead the day to day recovery and reconstruction efforts as the Deputy Chairman of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) under the Chairman ERRA who plays an important political and strategic role. ERRA was mandated through a Presidential Ordinance promulgated days after the earthquake to work closely with the State Government of PaK and the Provincial government of NWFP to facilitate and coordinate the reconstruction and rehabilitation effort.

To fulfill this challenging task, the Deputy Chairman's former experience in the Northern Areas and his familiarity with regular relief and recovery operations in Northern Pakistan was an excellent asset. The Deputy Chairman shaped ERRA by bringing a variety of skills and expertise together: serving civil servants from across Pakistan, army personnel from the engineering and infantry divisions and expertise

from international and national organizations including International Funding Institutions, bilateral donor agencies, the UN and I/NGOs to develop and support the 12 major socio-economic sectors addressed by ERRA.

2. REBUILDING 600,000 HOUSES

Addressing the Challenge

The housing sector was the most affected sector. The earthquake left 462,029 houses completely destroyed and another 99,303 severely damaged. In addition, an estimated 12,000 families lost their land through landslides and flooding caused by the earthquake. Some 84 percent of the total housing stock in Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PaK) was damaged or destroyed and in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) 36 percent of the total housing stock was damaged or destroyed. Nine districts were affected. Over 3.5 million people were rendered homeless. Housing reconstruction represents 44 percent of the total estimated reconstruction costs, which is US\$1.6 billion of the US\$3.5 billion total reconstruction cost.

Developing a Housing Reconstruction Policy

The very first days of Lt. General Nadeem's assignment as Deputy Chairman ERRA, were devoted to developing a housing reconstruction policy. The priority was to devise a policy that would allow the affected population to rebuild their homes and restart their lives as soon as possible. The harsh winter conditions called for realism and efficiency. Expertise from all stakeholders was sought. The housing strategy was developed as a collaborative effort between stakeholders that had expertise to offer or/and that were interested in contributing to the implementation of the policy. These stakeholders included International Funding Institutions, United Nations agencies, national and international NGOs and professional organizations. The Deputy Chairman's vision of maximizing agencies' experience for the best course of action was reflected in the intense debate and negotiations around the housing reconstruction strategy.

The Government's strategy for housing reconstruction entails providing grants directly to the affected families together with technical support to ensure that housing is rebuilt according to earthquake-resistant standards. The policy guarantees equity by offering the same financial and technical assistance package to all homeless families throughout the entire earthquake affected area. The policy is remarkably pro-poor by providing a flat rate of financial assistance that allows the poorest to rebuild a much better and safer house than the houses they had prior to the earthquake.

The housing reconstruction policy was finalized and started to be implemented in the Spring of 2006.

Coordination with Provincial/State Governments

The earthquake affected two different areas of Pakistan; both of which are mountainous and under developed areas of the country. Logistical and communication problems aside, politically the challenges were enormous since PaK has always been an extremely sensitive area for the Federal Government or any outsiders to work in. For the first time a system was devised in which the Federal and State governments allowed international partners to freely enter 3 districts and work closely with local government and affected populations. In NWFP, an opposition party is in power and at times in direct conflict with Federal government. The Deputy Chairman has maintained through great finesse, very astute diplomatic skills and constant consultation with State and Provincial governments, to develop a

cooperative working partnership to respond as one with speed, transparency and efficiency.

Contact with the Affected Communities

Consistently throughout his tenure, the Deputy Chairman spends, on average, three days a week in the affected areas to identify issues and monitor progress. His commitment to personally assess the situation in the field, hear and see concerns and issues from the affected population demonstrates how much he values the human dimension of the disaster and his trust in the resilience of the communities. This allows him to maintain a clear and accurate picture of the reality on the ground, beyond official reports. This commitment plays an important role in shaping decisions in the best interest of millions of people.

Overseeing the Creation and the Management of a New Institution

The establishment of ERRA raised concerns amongst many implementing and donor partners. Pakistani line ministries, bureaucrats, politicians and donor agencies did not readily support the logic of a parallel system being established to respond quickly to post earthquake needs, particularly in light of the extremely difficult terrain and harsh imminent winter. The Deputy Chairman responded to these doubts immediately by establishing transparent systems of accountability for all funding. This ensured that projects were approved and implemented in record time and the global cluster system was adopted to avoid duplication of activities and for harnessing expertise for all sectors.

For housing reconstruction, the Deputy Chairman effectively used the agency's hybrid personnel. The strengths of the Army with their outreach capacity to access the most difficult corners of the 9 districts, was used to conduct a door to door assessment of housing damage in record time. He established a partnership approach with the UN, bilateral organizations and 26 national and international NGOs to provide technical assistance and training in earthquake resistant building techniques. His ability to harness various partners' strengths for different tasks has been demonstrated by the results of reconstruction on the ground today.

The Deputy Chairman from the very beginning emphasized the need for sophisticated management information systems in each department, with data disaggregated by gender and vulnerability. This is extremely unique and as a result of his understanding of this need, the data now available to ERRA has allowed for improved monitoring and evaluation and informed decision making.

Addressing the Issue of Access to Land

The Deputy Chairman has shown leadership in his willingness tackle difficult, and often politically sensitive, issues for the benefit of those affected by the earthquake. The Financial Policy for Rural Landless would not have been developed without his personal involvement. When the need arose to decommission 41 camps in PaK and 3 in NWFP and organize the returns process for internally displaced people in the spring of 2006, the Deputy Chairman took the opportunity to explore sustainable solutions for those rendered landless due to the earthquake.

Although land is a Provincial/State issue in Pakistan, the Deputy Chairman in the interest of the vulnerable landless, decided to ensure they be provided with assistance. Referring to the Pinheiro principles, the Deputy Chairman promoted the development of a pragmatic and equitable landless policy. Following a broad consultative process, involving State and Provincial governments and other stakeholders primarily responsible for land management, ERRA developed a rural

landless policy in record time. The policy facilitates the purchasing of land and the reconstruction of a home for nearly 12,000 rural landless.

One of the hurdles that the Deputy Chairman assisted in overcoming was to allow technical and legal experts from outside the government sector, to assist and support the effort in developing a rural landless policy that would be acceptable to all stakeholders prior to camp closure.

Land issues are extremely political and sensitive in Pakistan. It would have been easier to leave the State and Province to find solutions for the rural landless. The Deputy Chairman understood that had that been the course of action, in all probability very few of the landless would have received land. Federal support and coordination was critical, as this allowed an equitable solution for all landless across the affected districts.

Addressing the Needs of the Vulnerable

One of the most outstanding contributions to the reconstruction effort has been the Deputy Chairman's support and recognition of the need to target vulnerable populations of the earthquake. To date, vulnerability surveys have been conducted twice through the course of the program. All programs have prioritized vulnerable populations in their implementation processes. In addition, a gender unit was established in ERRA as a result of which all management information systems and ERRA strategies are disaggregated according to sex and vulnerability. Sensitizing the Army and bureaucrats at all levels has been a challenge, but has now been institutionalized within ERRA systems and programs that the results are evident in data available for these groups. The Deputy Chairman has demonstrated a very strong personal interest and commitment for these issues and has taken the lead in supporting the social protection and gender units in ERRA. This is unprecedented for a government official in charge of coordinating a post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction operation.

Learning from Previous Disasters

The earthquake in Pakistan occurred one year after the Tsunami in Asia and shortly after Hurricane Katrina in the United States of America. The Deputy Chairman was keen to learn from good practices and not repeat the mistakes made in these recent disaster responses. The Deputy Chairman has shown the need to build on lessons learned from global disaster experience. Among others these lessons suggested that a people centered approach for housing reconstruction should be adopted. This approach would ensure a higher level of satisfaction, efficiency and a more effective policy for a complex reconstruction plan, across such difficult terrain.

3. FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

Mobilizing Financial Resources

Although the International Community, initially did not respond to the same degree to the calamity in Pakistan, as compared with the response, a year earlier, to the Tsunami disaster. However, by establishing transparent and solid monitoring and evaluation systems and developing sound policies, the Deputy Chairman managed to gain the full confidence and support of the donor community and to mobilize funds even beyond initial pledges and commitments.

The World Bank is the single largest donor of ERRA, it financially supports the housing reconstruction effort together with the Islamic Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, KFW and AFD. With large stakes and conditions attached, managing expectations of the donors and beneficiary interests on the other side has

been a challenge. Negotiating between seemingly opposite needs and demands has been taxing. Constant incremental changes have resulted in a broader menu of approved housing construction options for the beneficiaries. The pressure on the IFIs to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries has been, to a large part, due to the Deputy Chairman's ability to listen to his technical partners working on the ground and his personal contact with the field through which he understands the communities' reality first hand.

Mobilizing Technical Expertise

Recognizing the need to reach each affectee, ERRA relied on a community based approach for housing reconstruction which supports the establishment of Village Reconstruction Committees in each village or cluster of highly damage houses areas. To create such a network of community based organizations and to provide training and technical assistance promoting earthquake resistant housing reconstruction techniques, ERRA mobilized a large number of partner organizations (26 I/NGOs) and established Housing Reconstruction Centres operated by institutional partners (UN-Habitat, GTZ SDC). In addition, the Army was tasked to conduct building inspections to determine if the houses rebuilt are compliant with ERRA standards. The release of the financial assistance installments for housing reconstruction is dependent on these inspections.

The Deputy Chairman has a pivotal role in providing support on the many issues that inevitably arise among a large group of partners working on a single program. Providing the space for all to engage in the dialogue and influence methodologies has been a challenge he has successfully steered.

4. TIMELY DELIVERY

Under the constant supervision of the Deputy Chairman, the following has been achieved in a number of key sectors. As of May 2007, the livelihood support grant programme distributed Rs. 3,000 (\$ 50) in six installments to 260,000 vulnerable families. Vulnerable families included female headed households, families with at least one disabled person and families with five or more children.

In rural housing reconstruction, which is ERRA's flagship programme, progress to date (July 2007) is as follows: out of 561,332 damaged and destroyed houses 323,669 houses have been completed or are under construction; more than a billion dollars has already been disbursed by ERRA as financial assistance for housing reconstruction.

5. ENSURING LONG LASTING EFFECT

Empowering Communities

The Deputy Chairman's commitment to promote a community based approach for housing reconstruction has resulted in the creation of 1500 Village Reconstruction Committees to date. Most of these committees have been established in areas where no community organizations existed prior to the earthquake. By complementing individual efforts in housing reconstruction with the promotion of community based organization, the response to the earthquake provided an opportunity to strengthen the social fabric and to empower communities to support its members (especially vulnerable members) to rebuild their homes, promote safer construction techniques and maximize economy of scale through group procurement of building supplies and transportation costs. Although, these community organizations will not all continue to exist beyond the scope of the programme, many communities will have experienced

the benefits of being organized and able to jointly address issues that required more than an individual response.

Building Capacity of Construction Stakeholders

The approach promoted by the Deputy Chairman for the housing reconstruction process is to 'build back better' by incorporating basic earthquake resistant construction techniques in all rebuilt or retrofitted housing. The rural housing reconstruction strategy is supported through earthquake resistant construction training. By July 2007, more than 265,000 persons have been trained, including engineers, artisans, laborers and beneficiaries themselves.

As a result of this training, a pool of highly qualified earthquake engineers has been created. It is important to note that there was no expertise in Pakistan in earthquake engineering prior to the earthquake. To introduce these skills, the Deputy Chairman promoted regional cooperation by entrusting the National Earthquake Society of Earthquake Technology (NSET) from Nepal to provide a team of master trainers for over one year.

Local artisans have been trained but also a large number of migrant laborers. These laborers moved to the affected area for employment opportunities. They will continue to offer their services throughout the country when the housing reconstruction effort will be over. Through the training that they received, their skills have been tremendously improved. It is recognized that earthquake resistant construction depends to a great extent not only on design but also on the quality of workmanship. The rest of the country will benefit from this better qualified work force.

Promoting a Culture of Prevention and Behavioral Change

By incorporating a strong component of orientation for the beneficiaries on earthquake resistant construction in the housing reconstruction strategy, the Deputy Chairman created a demand from communities for safer construction. In addition, the introduction of community based disaster management to the Village Reconstruction Committees allows communities to work on disaster prevention and preparedness.

This culture of prevention and the change in behavior are already visible. When entering the earthquake affected area, it is currently virtually impossible to spot any of the previous Katcha constructions (stone masonry with heavy roof) that killed so many people during the earthquake. Instead, houses have been rebuilt using the materials and various earthquake resistant techniques that have been promoted.

Building on Cultural Heritage

Negotiating with International Financial Institutions with pre-determined standards (initially only reinforced cement mortar masonry) was difficult, but through effective leadership and technical assistance at his disposal the Deputy Chairman was able to provide a much wider range of housing designs for safer reconstruction to end users.

Two traditional construction techniques are being promoted. In PaK the Dhajji construction (timber frame construction) and in NWFP Bhatar construction (timber reinforced dry stone masonry). These ancient earthquake resistant building techniques have been developed over centuries to respond to recurrent earthquakes in this part of the world. Through disasters and empirical learning, local communities have learned how to make the best use of local material to build a safer house.

The imposition by the IFIs of allowing only modern building techniques may have resulted in the disappearance of these traditions. Instead, the use of these traditional

techniques has expanded. Artisans have acquired skills to improve their traditional techniques and new artisans have been trained to use them.

In addition to reinforcing cultural identity and pride, the determination of the Deputy Chairman to incorporate these traditions was motivated by the need to provide affordable construction techniques to the poorest and the most vulnerable members of the community. Modern building materials are by in large unaffordable due to extremely high carriage cost, especially for communities living far from roads or at high altitude. By incorporating these construction techniques which are based on the use of local materials, these communities are able to rebuild safer homes.

At least 30% of the affected population is rebuilding using these techniques. This represents tens of thousands of families who would have been otherwise excluded from financial assistance to rebuild their home.

6. BUILDING ON GOOD PRACTICES AND LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

Since 2005, a people centered approach for housing reconstruction is becoming more systematically applied in post-disaster situations. The IFIs, that often shape reconstruction strategies, have now adopted it. It is, therefore, important that lessons of experience are being captured to improve the response to future disasters.

A number of good practices emerge from the Pakistan post disaster experience.

- Pakistan managed to conduct a door to door damage assessment in a very short period of time. The Deputy Chairman decided to use the Army to conduct this assessment due to the difficulty of the terrain and the geographic scale of the disaster. Without such an assessment, a housing reconstruction strategy does not have a sound basis. To start rebuilding, this exercise needs to be completed. Speed is of the essence to avoid delays in reconstruction. Using the same methodology and criteria for assessing damages was an essential prerequisite to ensure equity.
- The decision of the Deputy Chairman to provide financial assistance by direct payment into each beneficiary's bank account seemed initially an impossible operation. However, Pakistan demonstrated that with appropriate support from the banking sector it is feasible, even in an area where people do not have bank accounts and where logistics are complicated. By adopting this system, ERRA ensured that there was no corruption and guaranteed transparency of its financial system.
- The grievance redress mechanism was not established from the very beginning of the operation. This resulted in discontentment and criticism from those who felt that they were not receiving appropriate support. Realizing this and the effects it would have on the success of the rural housing programme, the Deputy Chairman took swift action to establish a solid grievance redress mechanism. It became clear that even if late, such a mechanism is indispensable to provide justice to those affected by a disaster.
- The decision to task the Army with the inspection of housing reconstruction progress was taken because no other organization was better able to provide a large number of inspectors, throughout the earthquake affected area. However, not ensuring a direct link between training and financial assistance has resulted in weaker enforcement of building standards. In some parts of

the earthquake affected area, the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) funded by the World Bank is in charge of both training and releasing financial assistance. The impact of this arrangement on safer construction seems to be much more efficient. The carrot and stick principle always functions well.

- When ERRA was alerted to the widespread production of sub-standard building material such as cement blocks, the Deputy Chairman took action to (a) establish a system of quality control for small scale building material producers, (b) provide them with training and (c) sensitize the population on the quality of building materials. One important way of improving the quality of buildings is to ensure the quality of the building materials that are being used.
- By relying on people to rebuild their homes, it is essential to be ready to adapt the support that is offered to the decisions that people are making. The Deputy Chairman is always open to address new issues or revise the policy and strategy to be responsive to people's action. A great deal of flexibility and responsiveness is necessary for a successful people centered approach to housing reconstruction.
- The programme has clearly shown that standards alone are not enough to ensure safer construction. Skills need to be developed to be able to apply these standards. However, when the standards are too far from known techniques and require specialized skills the application of the standard will create a feeling of safety while often, in reality, it only results in unsafe construction.
- A people centered reconstruction strategy requires a strong training component and solid technical assistance. However, in Pakistan it was realized that very few national and international NGOs have the required experience and skills to provide such support and skills. This is due to fact that traditionally NGOs and international organizations support housing reconstruction through contractors that rebuild the houses for the people. There is a need to equip the international community to be better prepared to provide technical assistance for people centered housing reconstruction.
- The donor community did not respond well to the need for technical assistance. Donors seem less interest in these activities than in providing funding to organizations so that they rebuild houses for those with destroyed homes. Realizing that, the Deputy Chairman took the lead in fundraising for ERRA partner organizations providing training and technical assistance.
- As a result of the earthquake, the Government of Pakistan took the decision to create the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) that will be responsible for all coordination and management of future disasters in Pakistan as well as disaster preparedness and mitigation measures for the entire country long term. ERRA will eventually be subsumed by NDMA.

7. INNOVATION TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

For the first time in a post-disaster situation, a government decided to apply a people centered housing reconstruction strategy throughout the affected area. Practically this signified that no organization was allowed to build houses. In Pakistan the government believed that unleashing the potential of the people was the only way in which all the people in need can recover in a short time. The government recognizes

that people are able to cope with extreme difficulties; it recognized that people's ingenuity and creativity need to be directed for the rebuilding of their lives and physical assets. The government provided the keys to unlocking this huge potential. Firstly, the confidence to cross the psychological threshold, secondly, empowerment through mobilization, thirdly security, a place to call their own, fourthly financial assistance to get them started, lastly, technical advise to build safer housing. As a result the feeling of achievement, pride, dignity and security elevate the families to a level higher than their pre-disaster existence. Putting people at the center of housing reconstruction was a very courageous decision and the Deputy Chairman was instrumental in making it a reality.

One of the consequences of adopting a people centered approach to housing reconstruction is the unprecedented rate of reconstruction in post earthquake Pakistan despite having the most challenging terrain of the most recent disasters across the globe. The Deputy Chairman through his leadership responded to the very first priority of 3.5 million homeless "getting a roof on their head".

8. UNANIMOUS RECOGNITION

Recommendation letters

- United States of America Ambassador to Pakistan
- DFID Pakistan
- Head of CIDA Canada in Pakistan
- Housing Team Leader World Bank Pakistan
- ADB Pakistan
- Resident Coordinator United Nations Pakistan

Articles

- Selection of Press Articles

Reports

- Rebuild, Revive with Dignity and Hope, Annual Review 2005 to 2006, ERRA