



HANDS ON: With quake orphans are Bradford West MP Marsha Singh, centre, his wife Kuldeep, and Bradford businessmen Omar Khan, left, and Akhtar Hussain, right. Above, the devastation. Below, the Singhs meet another young victim of the earthquake

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Lives are rebuilt — MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2007 thanks to your aid

by **REBECCA WRIGHT**

T&A Reporter

Two years ago today a devastating earthquake shattered the lives of thousands of people living in southern Asia — and cash raised in Bradford is now helping people rebuild lives.

The disaster, which hit Pakistan, Kashmir, India and Afghanistan, is estimated to have killed more than 74,000 people and injured more than 100,000.

It caused buildings to collapse and triggered devastating landslides in and around its epicentre in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan. Scores of people in Bradford lost loved ones either in the earthquake itself or during the aftermath.

In Bradford a massive campaign started, with individuals and groups travelling to the disaster zone as well as raising money and sending essential aid.

Now the result of their hard work is beginning to show.

As the fundraising effort continues in Bradford, hospitals, schools, orphanages and shelters have been built from the money already raised.

Last month Bradford West MP Marsha Singh (Lab) travelled to Mirpur Azad Kashmir for the launch of an orphanage run by the Kashmir Orphans Relief Trust (Kort), a group headed by Bradford businessmen Akhtar Hussain and Omar Khan. Kort already runs an orphanage for 120 children.

But thanks to the grant of land from the Government of Azad Kashmir, Kort has started building a larger facility which will cater for 500 children, with a school, living accommodation, a library,

a canteen, a hospital and a mosque. Mr Khan, Kort's vice chairman, said the situation in Pakistan had improved vastly since the quake, but said a lot of work still needed to be done. He said the orphanage would be a long-term project and urged people in Bradford to help by donating money or sponsoring a child.

Other groups in Bradford have worked tirelessly to keep the aid flowing.

The Save the Mothers Trust, which is based at Oak Lane in Manningham, is a charity which helps causes in Bradford and Pakistan. The group rallied as soon as news about the earthquake broke, by sending members out to the worst-hit areas as well as setting up a sustained fundraising campaign in Bradford.

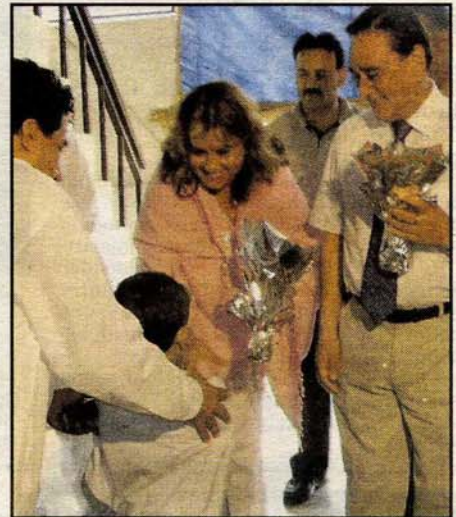
The charity set up an orphanage in the north-western frontier province of the country to help some of the thousands of children left parentless by the disaster.

SMT is also working to help set up a maternity unit in the disaster zone which will provide vital medical care to expectant mothers.

SMT member Ibrar Hussain, 21, said it was vital to keep the plight of Pakistan in the public eye. "There are still thousands of people without homes — they are still living in tents. The winter will start within the next month."

Those affected by the earthquake are also still high on the priority list for Bradford-based charity the Human Relief Foundation (HRF).

A week after the quake struck the group set up a refugee tent village by the River Neelum in Muzaffarabad, housing more than 350 families. Since then many of the families in the village have tried to start rebuilding their lives.



To aid the progress HRF has built 20 shelters to house more than 100 people. It has also provided regular emergency aid to the communities in Muzaffarabad.

In the run-up to today's anniversary HRF's project co-ordinator Yousaf Razaq and its director Nabeel Al-Ramadhani have been visiting the areas helped by the charity. Their ten-day mission will include the opening of the shelters.

Mr Razaq and Dr Al-Ramadhani will also take part in a gathering to feed around 3,000 people, distribute gifts to more than 1,000 orphans and give out a week's supply of food to 1,000 families.

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