



SUCCESSSTORY | Gulab: A new life at 70

Bahaal Project | Emergency Relief And Early Recovery For The Flood Affectees Across Pakistan

In the book of life when the page turns to 70, blessings and gift from God are less expected and even less anticipated. For most the waiting game for the inevitable end had already begun at least a decade back. Hopelessness becomes a matter of routine and every moment seems like an eternity. In this twilight of one's life it is not hard to imagine what impact an obliterating flood would have had on them. If life as it was not so miserable for Ghulab Khatoon, a widow in her 70s living with two grandsons in the Choodyo village of district Jacobabad, the flood that swept away her house and all her possessions made sure that no one in her village would ever see a smile on her face again. But the floods that took away everything that she once owned gave her something that was her lifelong dream.

The roof of a solid-brick house was something she had never lived under the shade of before but thanks to the USAID funded Bahaal project that was no longer a distant dream for her. She lives in the Union Council of Thull, which was submerged in 10 feet of water for almost two months. She narrates the flood situation in her village, "Initially the news of the flood was not taken seriously by anybody in the village. Flood water has never even come close to our village so we thought it was either just a rumor or the whole flood situation was hyped up. But later when the news of the nearby villages being bulldozed by the ferocious flood reached our ears we realized how grave a danger we were in. We had to evacuate the village immediately due to our own carelessness and hence we could not take any possessions with us. There was confusion all around. No one could believe what was happening to them and their village. In a state of sheer panic, I with my two grandsons took a bus to Karachi where we stayed with our relatives."



Gulab standing outside her Bahaal provided shelter. The shelter is under construction.

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Ghulab sitting in her tent continued telling me about her ordeal in a voice that was trembling due to the frailty of her old age. She said that when she came back to her village and saw that there was almost nothing left of it, she just felt that her life was over. "Being a widow at 70 you naturally do not have much to look forward to. For me, to lose all my material possessions in that manner was like experiencing death. For a few days after coming back I could not talk to anyone. I thought I had lost my voice. But it came back as soon as I saw the Bahaal team walking in our village assessing the damage caused by the flood and promising people of a one room shelter in the few weeks that were to follow. The sight of the team was as refreshing as a gush of fresh breeze gently sweeping across my face after being almost choked to death. I felt alive again," says Gulab while describing her feelings after being promised of a house by the Bahaal Team.

She said she was more than just happy. Even before the floods she lived in a mud house and therefore had never really known how it felt to own a brick house of her own. "It feels spectacular. I feel young again," Gulab expressing her delight at the prospect of owning her own house soon. Before this she said, she had been a liability for her grandsons and villagers but she won't be anymore. Now thanks to USAID she can invite people to her own permanent house. She also said that she did not have enough words to express gratitude to either the people of USAID who provided her money to build her house or the villagers who are constructing her house for her. At this fragile age she could not ask God for more. At the end she said she always felt that God was only interested in taking away the things she once had, (referring to her late husband, her children who had left her and her possessions she lost during the floods) but now she realizes how wrong she had always been. God she said is indeed the best of all planners.

Written by

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Gulab sitting in her tent with a village kid.

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