At 8:50 a.m. on October 8, 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck northern Pakistan causing serious damage in the North West Frontier (NWFP) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) provinces. Over 4000 villages were affected, 73,000 people killed, 79,000 injured and 3.3 million people rendered homeless. Over 470,000 houses were completely destroyed, nearly 65% of the hospitals in the area were destroyed or badly damaged and an estimated 10,000 school buildings were affected. As in many emergencies, the most vulnerable segment of the population was among the hardest hit: the elderly, women whose husbands were killed or disabled, and an estimated 1.6-2.2 million children. Compounding the destruction of the initial earthquake were a series of strong aftershocks that continued for weeks. In addition to the estimated $5 billion in property damage, there was significant loss of livelihoods through destruction of arable land, crops and livestock, businesses, and jobs. Despite the resilience of the population, the impact of the disaster was overwhelming and devastating. The timing and geography of the earthquake – which occurred at the onset of the harsh winter and in remote, mountainous terrain – caused serious concern about the vulnerability of the affected populations and their ability to survive.

The local, regional and international aid communities mobilized immediately, and supplies began to pour into the region. As in previous disasters of this scale, the relief effort was fragmented, with many different players providing a myriad of services. The Government of Pakistan established the Federal Relief Commission (FRC) and the Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) to serve as a liaison between the government, international and national organizations involved in relief and rehabilitation. Relief and recovery committees were formulated as focal points at the district level.

One year later, it is still not clear whether the Pakistan relief effort was considered a success, whether there was adequate relief to meet the needs of the affected populations, and what some of the remaining issues continue to be. In order to understand these dynamics, Fritz Institute conducted a survey of affected households to assess their perceptions of the damage, loss, and humanitarian assistance provided. The research builds on similar surveys Fritz Institute conducted after the South Asia Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. It is hoped that this ongoing research of beneficiary perceptions provides insight to donors, policy makers, governments and humanitarian agencies about the factors that influence the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian assistance.

**METHODOLOGY**

This report outlines the results of a survey of 621 Pakistani households in the five most-affected districts of the North West Frontier Province (Abbottabad, Batagram, Kohistan, Mansehra, and Shangla), conducted in August 2006, ten months after the earthquake. The earthquake-affected households were asked to record damage or loss by responding to questions of resource sufficiency before the earthquake, and almost one year later. They were also asked to recall the principal providers of relief goods and services two months after the earthquake and at the time the study was implemented (ten months after the earthquake). Finally, they were asked to provide their perceptions of the adequacy, timeliness, quality and distribution process of aid that they received, and their satisfaction with the same. The locations were selected to represent geographical diversity of the affected region. Of the eight most-affected districts, the five covered in this survey comprise approximately 67% of the estimated population affected. Of the total 621 households, 32% were from areas located at very high altitudes, 45% from villages located at high altitudes, and the rest from villages located on the plains or at ground level.

About 53% of the respondents surveyed were over 40 years of age. The literacy level among the respondents surveyed was low with only 50% reporting that they could read and write. About 46% of the affected respondents surveyed were illiterate. Among the literate heads of households, over 50% of the respondents surveyed had completed up to ten years of school education. The main occupations across households in the sample were non-farm laborers, farm laborers, and government employees (see Table 1).

Given the traditional Pashtun culture, interviews were only possible with
male heads of households, and all the interviewers were also male. The structured interviews, designed to elicit satisfaction levels and perceptions, were conducted in the local language by interviewers from the region. For the most part, standard five-point scales were used to gauge respondent feedback. The interviewers – professional social science researchers – were trained in the interview protocol in Peshawar, Pakistan in the first week of August 2006. They were taken through the research instrument, participated in mock interviews and received feedback before being deployed in the field. In total, three teams of four researchers each conducted all the interviews.

KEY FINDINGS
1. One Year After the Earthquake, 60% of the People Affected by the Earthquake Remain Displaced, Unable to Return to Their Homes. People Have Become Much Poorer with 63% of Households Suffering from Income Disruption.

For the population in the affected areas, the earthquake had a profound impact on every aspect of life. Before the earthquake, 69% were living in semi-permanent structures (homes made from earth and stones) and 30% were in permanent structures (houses made from brick, cement and wood). After the earthquake, approximately 60% of affected households were displaced and, a year later, are still not living in their homes. In fact, two-thirds of those displaced reported that they were living in tents or public buildings in their villages. The districts of Batagram and Kohistan were the most shelter-affected with 82% and 65% of households displaced, respectively. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents overall said that they did not have winterized shelter last winter. Looking ahead to the coming winter, vulnerability remains high in light of the fact that over three-quarters of those still living in tents are at high altitudes.

A stunning 63% of those surveyed reported having their income disrupted because of damage to facilities or land. An additional 10% reported hardship due to the impairment of markets. The drop in income is particularly evident at the lowest income levels. Prior to the disaster, 6% of households brought in an income of below 1500 Pakistan rupees per month (approximately $25 US), while in the wake of the disaster, five-times the number of households reported such an income (see Table 2). Before the earthquake, 97% of those surveyed said that they had adequate income, with 33% reporting just enough income to survive, 45% all they needed to survive, and 19% more than they needed (see Table 3). Ten months after the earthquake, only 69% reported income sufficiency with 1% having more income than they needed, 25% all they needed to survive, and 43% just enough income to survive.

The earthquake’s impact on lives and livelihoods appears to have been more severe on the most rural, agricultural and remote areas of NWFP. The three professions that were most affected by the disaster, in terms of income, included farm laborers, non-farm laborers and farmers. (3) Households in Batagram, where over half of those surveyed were working in agriculture before the disaster, reported the lowest levels of access to food, water, shelter, and income. The district also displayed the highest number (82%) of households continuing to live outside their homes ten months after the earthquake. A significant number of households had shifted to living on earthquake-related compensation benefits and unemployment had risen from 1% to 9%. Of those reporting being unemployed or living on compensation, the majority had previously been farm and non-farm laborers.

2. Humanitarian Assistance Provided was Inadequate Relative to Need. Ten Months Later, Large Numbers of the Earthquake-Affected Report Having Acute Needs for Basic Assistance. To understand the immediate and ongoing impact of the earthquake on households in the affected area, survey respondents were asked to what extent they needed aid two months after the earthquake and at the present time. Two months after the earthquake, an overwhelming majority (more than 75%) reported a “great” or “very great” need for assistance in all sectors (see Table 4). For example, 96% of respondents reported needing assistance with shelter to a great extent or higher, and 93% needed the same levels of assistance for the restoration of livelihood. “Our village is on the top of the mountains. Our main need is drinking water as the earthquake destroyed the sewer system and water pipes,” observed a villager from Karodha in the Abbottabad district.

Despite the widely expressed needs, large proportions of affected households reported not receiving any assistance in key sectors almost a year after the earthquake (see Table 5). According to one Mansehra survey participant, “whatever relief was provided, it was totally insufficient.” Fifty percent (50%) or more of the respondents in need of livelihood restoration, drinking water, sanitation, clothing and relocation at the two-month mark had not received services; at the ten-
month mark, even larger percentages of those households in need of the same services reported receiving none. The percentage of those who needed but did not receive food almost doubled over the same period. For example, in Shangla two months after the earthquake, 88% of households surveyed reported receiving no assistance in obtaining drinking water, while ten months later those without drinking water remained very high at 89%. “We are facing the problem of getting clean drinking water, as the natural resources are all destroyed by the earthquake,” said a Shangla villager.

**Footnotes:**

(1) To date, Fritz Institute has conducted in-person interviews with over 6,000 relief recipients across aid agencies, disasters, countries and time, in order to develop an evidence base of what works and what does not across the sector.

(2) The research team was unable to obtain permission to enter Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), the other most-affected province, due to the ongoing conflict and political sensitivities.

(3) Those cultivating their own land.