



PHOTO & CAPTION

Children Start School in Relief Camps



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

The Allai Valley was one of the areas hardest hit by the October 2005 earthquake. Many of its 190,000 inhabitants perished, and about 90 percent of houses were damaged or destroyed. Some 16,000 survivors relocated to the Mehra Tent Camp, where USAID provided shelter, blankets, and emergency food rations.

The damage to homes, roads, and farmland means that many families will remain in the camp at least through the end of the school year, leaving children without access to formal education. In response, tent schools have been erected in camps like Mehra. USAID is supporting the education of over 2,000 children attending two of these schools in the camp and plans to help open another school in response to community demand.

Education advisors at the school say that less than 10 percent of parents residing in the camp ever attended school themselves. In fact, many of the children in the camp had never attended school before arriving in Mehra. Despite literacy rates of 10 to 20 percent, parents enthusiastically support sending their children to school.

Educational advisors Sarah Lim and Anita Malley hand a school uniform to one of the students heading to school for the first time ever.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
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Three months after the earthquake, USAID began distributing school uniforms to school-age children in Mehra. Children received the uniforms with enthusiasm, reflecting the commitment to education that their parents and camp residents had made. For many children, the tent schools have given them their first opportunity to have access to education. T

The U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Ryan Crocker, commented, "The U.S. Government is committed to continuing to provide education to this community when they return to their villages."