

UNICEF-supplied water filters helping IDPs



© UNICEF-
Pakistan/2006/A Zaidi
Nerox water filter
being used in an IDP
camp in Bagh

MANSEHRA, 22, April, 2006- The earthquake that struck Pakistan the 8th of October not only killed more than 70,000 children and adults, and devastated immense parts of the country, it also ruined basic health units, school facilities and water schemes.

Most water schemes were badly damaged, and families were forced to fetch water through natural spring sources, which are often contaminated with contaminants harmful for human consumption.

In the Mansehra district alone, more than 160,000 thousand people had to evacuate from valleys and communities to relief camps set up by Government of Pakistan, UN agencies and NGOs.

Once in camps, water quality became a top priority, as UNICEF concentrated its efforts in keeping families alive and healthy.

People were not use to treating water – let alone dealing with diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera, stomach infections and other related diseases caused by bad water. To prevent such cases, UNICEF distributed more than 3,000 Nerox filters in various relief camps in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

Fatima Sultan, her two daughters and her grandfather Abdul Rahim live in Kashtra camp, near Balakot city. The family is considered high vulnerable, therefore allowed to stay in the camp. She says, “We never filtered water before, but now we all drink from the filter tap and never experienced stomach disorders.”

Nerox Filters are small scale drinking water devices for personal or family use. It works on a gravity principle and need no pressurized water. All filters use a Nerox Membrane to produce 100% bacteria free water.

According to Mahbood Badwa, UNICEF water engineer, Nerox filters are technically high quality. He adds, “This type of filters helped entire families to obtain 50 or 60 litres of clean potable water per day. Initially we used them in camps, but now we are taking them up to communities and valleys.”

Villages like Mori in Garihabibullah Union Council suffered from contaminated water. One hundred families were given filters, as well as training methods by female and male hygiene promoters.

Another example is Jabori town, in the middle of Siran Valley. It was heavily pummelled by the earthquake. UNICEF has facilitated training of Nerox filters' utilization in camps and villages to convince people of its effectiveness. These trainings include hygiene promotion messages and maintenance of family filters.

Among the earthquake survivors, there has been a great demand and acceptance for these types of filters. For instance, children now drink from these filters instead of from natural water springs, proving them clean and safe water which is essential for a healthy and harmless life.