

RELIEF WORKERS' NEW PLEA

Back home — with a mission



by **SUNITA BHATTI**
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Three Bradford charity workers, who travelled to the earthquake-devastated region of Kashmir, have returned home with a mission to get more aid to help survivors get through the harsh winter months.

Nafees Nazir, Dr Ahmad Al-Sammari and Mohammed Shabbir, all travelled to Islamabad one week after the earthquake hit with the Human Relief Foundation as part of a team of volunteer workers.

They worked with a charity called Muslim Hands, whose own offices in Muzaffarabad had been destroyed in the earthquake.

For the first few days the team spent time in Islamabad buying tents, blankets, medicine and other aid supplies which filled four trucks. Three were immediately dispatched to Muzaffarabad and one was sent to Abbotabad.

Mr Shabbir travelled with the truck to Abbotabad to a women and children's hospital. He said that there was an influx of people to the town looking for help.

"Hospitals that have a maximum of 1,000 patients are now having to cope with 4,000 patients," he said.

"The infrastructure has been decimated. People need supporting for the long term until they make steps towards some sort of normality."



RETURN: Human Relief Foundation volunteers who have been to Kashmir, from left, Nafees Nazir and Dr Ahmad Al-Sammari

Because all of the buildings have either been damaged by the earthquake or deemed structurally unsafe, all the injured are being treated in the open and the things that doctors are most in need of are plates, pins and drills to cope with the severity of injuries.

The Human Relief Foundation has been allocated a piece of land near the River Neelum, outside of Muzaffarabad where a small village for 500 families is being set up.

The team spent a lot of time pitching tents and getting supplies to families.

Mr Nazir said everyone had been affected by the disaster.

"The earthquake did not discriminate against wealth, creed or culture," he said.

"Whatever the contribution large or small now is the time to do it. We have got to do what we can now."

One of the main concerns for aid agencies is the potential outbreak of disease.

Dr Al-Sammari said Muzaffarabad city centre had been cordoned off to stop people getting in because there are still many bodies trapped under the rubble.

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