

Resume Talis Reconstruction works

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The Felix Baltistan Foundation, in collaboration with the local organisation FIFBM and Talis Emergency Committee, has recommenced the reconstruction of the village of Talis in Baltistan (Pakistan.) The village was hard hit by monsoon rains in August 2010. During the months of the hard winter, with the help of two local architects, work has continued on optimizing the design of the houses.

The reconstruction works are being made possible by the contributions of hundreds of Basque citizens.

In late February, with the end of winter and the rise in minimum temperatures from -20 °C to -5 °C, the valley communities of Hushe once more return to the pulse of everyday life.

As progress was made in the early days of reconstruction of Talis, it was decided that the work should be divided into two phases. The reason for this was that during the months of December, January and February, the area becomes impassable due to cold and snow and so further building work is not feasible. In late February, before the start of the second phase, a team from the Felix Baltistan Foundation returned to the area in order to track the work already done in the first phase and to prepare and optimize the rest of the tasks to be undertaken in the coming months.

One of the tasks the team would like to strengthen is the organizational capacity of the inhabitants of Talis, through the Emergency Committee of Talis. The small initial group of people who began to coordinate the emergency, has now become a stable group of twenty people amongst whom, for the first time, four women have been incorporated.

Reconstruction of houses

The first floor construction of thirty-three houses has already been completed. Another house has already been allocated new land and construction is about to begin, and two more are waiting to close the land exchange agreement with the owners. In this way, FIFBM along with Talis Reconstruction Committee is raising the awareness of the villagers and especially those to be transferred to a safe area.

In the reconstruction of the houses, the heads of the households work in conjunction with the hired professional technicians who check that the houses are built according to the criteria and plans. All the plans for the walls and stone and wood structures have been carefully gone through to make sure that the materials have been used appropriately.

This Spring will see the beginning of construction work for the second floor, where we will apply the improvements designed into the redevelopment plan: improving the bathrooms with the addition of hot water, improved 'rocket style' cooking stoves with the introduction of locally produced materials which allows better combustion, reinforcing the walls with cement and improving the insulation between the two floors.

A pilot project will also be conducted in two model homes to trial improved thermal insulation of windows, through the incorporation of a specific technical design and double glazed windows. Two families have been chosen whose houses have the right orientation conditions and also whose influence on the villagers will encourage a wider distribution of these improvements.

At the same time during this trip, the FBF TEAM made a topographical survey of the village to determine the possibility and the extent of installing a drainage and sewage system. After the study, a pilot project

was proposed for a neighbourhood model. Three or four houses with favourable inclination and orientation conditions will be chosen for the installation of two treatment plants: one plant for decantation and another for phytodepuration. The streets and entrances to these houses will also be developed and improved. This project is intended to highlight the health and hygiene benefits of a sanitation system provided to an urban population, and to demonstrate that this system can be incorporated by the inhabitants and be replicated in their homes and neighbourhoods if they so wanted.

As for the construction of the protection wall, the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan is currently carrying out the task of clearing the area affected by avalanches with a bulldozer. This is the area where FBF and FIFBM plan to build a protective wall to avoid similar future disasters. A playground and laundry area will be provided in this area.

Finally, with the arrival of Spring, the restoration and preparation work for cropland devastated by water and traditional irrigation canals, debris avalanches will also be accelerated. These tasks are being carried out exclusively by the residents of Talis.

Comunitario.JPG work