

BHRC IN KASHMIR

On October 8th 2005, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck the Pakistan region of Kashmir close to the border with India. The quake caused massive destruction through building collapse and devastating landslides and resulted in an estimated death toll in excess of 80,000. Three BHRC members visited the region shortly afterwards. Earthquake engineer, Tiziana Rossetto and seismologist, Paul Burton, made up half of the UK Institute of Structural Engineers' EEFIT (Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation) Team, that spent eight days in the region assessing damage. In some areas more than 80 percent of buildings had collapsed; 'pancaking' down due to heavy, reinforced concrete floor slabs laid upon weak columns. Because the earthquake struck during the day, an estimated 35,000 school children lost their lives as around 1,400 schools were flattened. The EEFIT team visited Abbottabad, Mansehra, Muzaffrabad, Bagh, Balakot and Islamabad. They conducted surveys on foot, and with the aid of US military helicopters took aerial photos of remote areas in order to identify the distribution and extent of damage to structures, roads and bridges. The preliminary report of the EEFIT team will go online in January 2006. Funded by CARE International and the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (US Agency for International Development), Charles Kelly of the BHRC led a team to the quake-affected region in order to undertake a rapid assessment of the effects of the earthquake on the environment. In their report, *Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment: South Asia Earthquake, Pakistan*, Kelly and his team identify five, broad, disaster-related environmental issues arising from the earthquake: adequate climateappropriate shelter, health, changes to the physical environment, inappropriate relief aid and debris management. The full report is published online at: www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster_studies/rea/training_reports/PakREARReport.pdf.

[Image: Earthquake induced landsliding, Muzaffarabad, Pakistan. Courtesy Paul Burton and EEFIT]

