

Case Study

First Aiders; The heroes of the hour

Being on the spot and responding quickly and effectively when faced with an emergency situation such as heart attacks, choking, cuts and injuries, drowning or electrocution makes First Aiders the heroes of the hour.

Amna Ibrahim, a 19 years old girl resident of village Khailan (UC Ichrian District Mansehra) is one such notable person who has been serving her community with her acquired life saving skills for past two years. Amna though having some physical disability (hunchback) didn't make it her weakness, studied up to primary level & running her own in-house small grocery shop mostly visited by local women & children. She not only sells grocery items but checks blood pressure, takes temperature, gives tips & advice to mother of sick children suffering diarrhea & other common illnesses. But her foremost skills are providing first aid to injured (cuts, injuries, bleeding from deep wounds). She attended basic health related training in 2006 provided by some local NGO in post earthquake scenario. The training provided her with knowledge regarding healthy health & hygiene practices, prevention of some daily life sickness (fever, cough, diarrhea, dehydration).



Figure 1 Amna Ibrahim; hero of the hour

Amna had been disseminating the acquired knowledge through discussing it with women visiting her shop. But she always felt that there was room for more esp. in case of attending any emergency situation. So when Haashar Association came up with opportunity of delivering first aid training, Amna was foremost member of Khailan VCC (village coordination committee) to join the training. When asked about what she learnt new & how she found it useful to serve her villagers, she said, "CPR & attending deep wound so to stop bleeding till patient is rushed to the nearby health service at Ichrian is new to my life-saving skills. Besides that how to deal a patient suffering fractures, displaced joint or serious concussion is something I highly value".

Talking about one specific case she dealt in last months was providing first aid to neighborhood women; she narrated the story with a marked humbleness.

“It was a routine day & I was sitting in my home-based shop arranging my groceries items in shelves when a few women from my neighborhood came rushing to my place supporting a woman with head injury (a deep wound). I immediately laid her down on a nearby chair & examined her wound. I washed up her bleeding wound with warm water mixed with anti septic. I observed that wound was deep enough requiring stitches”, says Amna. “I informed them to arrange some vehicle to take her to Ichrian hospital to have stitches from the doctor meanwhile I put clean cotton gauze on the cut & held it with required pressure for some time. I supported the gauze with wrapping bandage on it till the woman’s husband came up with vehicle & took her to Hospital at twenty minutes travel from our village. They came back to me next day & thanked me saying according to doctor my attending the wound helped stop bleeding thus preventing weakness or any potential shock for the injured woman”, said Amna smilingly. Though happy with the way she serves her people she also identified some unattended areas & called upon for assistance from Govt /NGOs to play their roles; trainings & provision of health related services; mother & child health care, TBAs training (traditional birth attendants), vaccination for preventable diseases esp. in children & expecting mothers.

She closed her conversation on the words,” It’s not the disease or disasters which kill us but our unawareness & lack of skills to combat it which makes us a victim & no matter what you do, it pays to have first aid skills because you can't learn it in an emergency”.