

IDPs, Disaster & Food Security

IDPs & Disaster

Future of IDPs from Khyber Agency Looks Dismal: Report by Save the Children International

Ongoing military operations in Khyber Agency have forced hundreds of families to evacuate from the area. More than 240,000 people have been registered as displaced from Khyber Agency so far and the number is expected to increase as the registration process continues, according to a report by Save the Children International. Families in Khyber Agency continue to receive instructions from the military to evacuate the area. The situation is becoming even worse; in addition to an ongoing military operation launched by the Pakistan Army against militants in January, more families from Upper Dir are also coming to the IDP camps after recent cross-border raids. Aid agencies fear the number of internally displaced persons from Khyber Agency will top the previous influx from other areas where military operations were carried out, said a senior official of an aid agency in Pakistan. The study reveals that about 57,000 IDPs live at the Jalozai camp, while the rest of them are staying with host families in Peshawar and Nowshera districts. Access to basic services and facilities is a monumental challenge for a majority of vulnerable IDP families. While there is no full-fledged military operation in Khyber Agency, displacement may last six to nine months. Aid agencies, however, predict this is going to be a protracted crisis, according to a source working at the Fata Secretariat Islamabad.

The report further stated that the local authorities have requested international aid agencies, including the United Nations, to assist in meeting their needs. After the revision of Humanitarian Operational Plan (HOP) in April 2012, it was decided by the humanitarian community that the HOP should also support meeting the needs of the recent influx of registered IDPs displaced from Khyber Agency. Presently, the total amount needed under the revised HOP is \$307 million. Only \$139 million (45%) has been funded so far. The revised HOP reflects discussions on the outstanding needs of vulnerable IDPs and host populations in northwestern Pakistan. The Humanitarian Operational Plan covers all relief activities for IDPs while they are displaced, as well as support for their return home. It is an inter-cluster plan that provides a holistic approach to meeting outstanding humanitarian needs, factoring in anticipated shifts and changes throughout the year. The NGO highlighted in the study also complained about the delayed issuance of work visas from Pakistan for international aid workers, a problem which is causing increased administrative costs and inability to adequately support projects. The report urges the international community to advocate for reduced restrictions and for the government of Pakistan to increase its support of aid agencies. Salient features of the report:

- The revised Humanitarian Operational Plan (HOP) is currently 45% underfunded
- Over 90% of new IDPs are staying off-camp, living in rented spaces or with host families
- Due to the gradual onset of this crisis, it has attracted little international attention, making it difficult to gain funding
- Further efforts are required to ensure access to health services and nutritional support for women and children
- The government must ensure aid workers have continued access to conflict affected areas, and that their security is prioritized

The Express Tribune – July 01, 2012

UK Sends Help for 1million Flood-Affected People of Sindh: Sindh

The UK government announced housing, seeds, and animal fodder to help up one million people in Sindh affected by last year's devastating floods. Some 1.8 million people in Sindh are still living without adequate shelter, exposed to the elements and vulnerable to disease, with this year's monsoon fast approaching. The new support from the UK's Department for International Development is helping more families to prepare for possible future floods by providing 18,000 families or 126,000 people with material and advice to build permanent robust houses on raised platforms, which will resist future floods; seeds, fertilizer, trees, and animal fodder for around 100,000 families or 700,000 people so that they can grow food and generate income; and pre-positioned emergency items in anticipation of further monsoon floods this summer, so that emergency help can be provided as quickly as possible to 15,000 families or around 105,000 people. This will include:

- Emergency shelter
- Solar lamps
- Sleeping mats
- Other essential items

The UK government provided immediate lifesaving support after last year's floods, and has now helped more than 1.6 million people to get back on their feet. The support will go to the worst flood-affected districts of Sindh:

- Umerkot
- Mirpurkhas
- Sanghar
- Matiyari
- Badin
- Benazirabad
- Tando Mohammed Khan
- Tando Allahyar

Daily Times – July 04, 2012

Flood Commission Alerts Provinces about Rising Water Levels

The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has alerted the provinces as well as other concerned authorities about rising water flows at different water courses with Indus touching its low flood point and Kabul climbing to medium range flooding. At present, the Indus is at low flood but its level having an increasing trend with rise in temperature in the Glacier and rain in its catchment areas whereas other rivers such as Jhelum, Chenab and Ravi are normal. The FFC told the provinces in the alert for the coming days and weeks that Kabul is continually rising up and presently it is at medium range flood at Warsak-Nowshera. Swat River is at low flood stage. Tarbela and Mangla dams are at elevations of 1445.54 feet and 1136.05 ft respectively, which are 104.46 ft and 105.95 ft below their highest level of conserving 1550.00 ft and 1242.00 ft. The heavy rains and glacier melting could even bring the major rallies up to 15, 00,000 cusecs a day with the Tarbela, presently, having enough space to absorb the water quantum but only for a week or some more days.

The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), having operational command of the dams, would have to manage the flows keeping in view the water availability as well as to save the population from floods, he maintained. The official said that the Tarbela, Chashma and Mangla reservoirs' collective storage is 3.219 maf in comparison with 5.520 maf of last year's on July 12-13. The official said while quoting the Flood Forecasting Division (FFD) that westerly

wave over northeastern Afghanistan lies over northern parts. "Well marked Seasonal Low lies over northwestern Balochistan. Most current from Arabian Sea is penetrating Kashmir and upper Punjab upto 5000 Ft. The weather system is being closely monitored by the Meteorological Department. Widespread thunderstorm/rain with isolated heavy falls is expected over Lahore, Sahiwal, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Faisalabad & Rawalpindi divisions, besides Kashmir, upper catchments of rivers Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej in next 24 hours, an official communication provides. Scattered thunderstorm/rain with isolated heavy falls may also occur over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Southern Punjab and northeastern Balochistan including Bahawalpur division, besides upper catchment of river Indus during the same period.

The News - July 14, 2012

Food Insecurity

Government Meets Inflation Target, Say Statistics Officials: Report by Consumer Price Index

The government has finally achieved at least one key target: it has managed, more or less, to restrict inflation during the recently-concluded fiscal year to 11%. Reduction in prices of staple commodities and a recent decline in oil prices has helped restrict inflation during the last fiscal year (June-July) 2011-12 to 11.01%, Sohail Ahmad, Secretary Statistics, has said while announcing figures for the nation's most closely-watched indicator – the Consumer Price Index. For the last fiscal year, the government had set a 12% target for inflation. It is the only key target that has been achieved. The government missed its targets for:

- Economic growth
- Budget deficit between expenses and receipts
- Current account deficit between external payments and receipts, and the tax collection target

Above all, it spent roughly Rs425 billion beyond the approved budget by the parliament, indicating weak fiscal management. Core inflation – which is a measure of non-food, non-energy inflation, and is considered an important litmus test for inflationary trends – remained at 11.4% over the last fiscal year. Munir Aslam, Director General Statistics, said that double-digit inflation in the groups of:

- Clothing
- Footwear
- Health
- Transport
- Education
- Restaurants was the real cause of concern

During the last fiscal year:

- 30.5% increase was witnessed in motor vehicle taxation
- The cost of keeping household servants rose 28.4%
- Whole gram prices increased 28.3%
- Spices 28%
- Firewood 26.8%
- Fresh fruits 25.6%
- Personal equipments 24.4%
- The prices of medical equipments also increased 24%
- Kerosene oil 23.2%

- Condiments 22.8%
- Woolen cloth 22.8%
- Motor fuel 22.8%
- Gas became more costly by 20.4%
- nuts prices soared by a fifth

Monthly Inflation

In June – the last month of fiscal 2012 – the inflation rose to 11.3% as compared to the same month of the previous year. The increase was due to a rise in prices in all groups.

- The prices of food and non-alcoholic groups rose by almost 10%
- Perishable food items' rates increased 11.7%
- Clothing and footwear 18.7%
- Housing water, electricity, gas and other fuels group's rates soared 10.8%
- Furnishing and households 22.3%
- Healthcare costs increased 14.3%

The Express Tribune – July 03, 2012

Pakistan to Miss MDGs Due to Slow Growth: Report by UN

Pakistan will be missing most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with slow economic growth and increasing income inequality in the country.

According to UN annual MDG report for 2012, besides slow economic growth of around 3% for the last 3-4 years, the income inequality in the country has been on rise, whereby share of lowest quintile in consumption is only 9.6% against 40.3% for the highest quintile – a startling disparity. The labor force is increasing at a rate of 3.2%. The current slow economic growth is not creating sufficient jobs for the new entrants to the labor market hence adding to the pool of unemployed population. Internationally, eight major MDGs were identified and every country had set some specific targets to achieve them by 2015.

MDGs included:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Gender equality and women empowerment
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS
- Malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development

Pakistan had adopted 18 targets and 41 indicators against which progress was measured. However, the UN annual report said data against only 33 indicators was available. Of the total 33 indicators, progress on 20 indicators is lagging behind, slow on four, on track for three, off track for one, while targets against five indicators have been met. Pakistan has achieved the targets for access to improved water source, environmental sustainability goal through number of vehicles using environment friendly CNG fuel, and it is likely to achieve the target for controlling HIV prevalence among youth and proportion of children suffering from diarrhea. It already has highest ratio of women parliamentarians in the South Asia. The three indicators where the progress is on track and the target could be met by 2015 include land protected for conservation of wildlife, proportion of tuberculosis (TB) cases detected and cured, coverage of target population for lady health workers.

The four indicators where there is progress, but on slower pace, are:

- Gender equality
- Women empowerment
- Combating HIV/AIDS,
- Malaria and other diseases

There are a number of indicators where progress has been lagging behind and it is most likely that targets will not be achieved. One of these indicators is the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption. This is core indicator for assessing the level of food insecurity in the country.

The Express Tribune – July 04, 2012

Price Hike to Neutralize Likely Ramadan Relief

While manufacturers and traders have increased the prices of all basic commodities over the recent months in the absence of an effective price checking mechanism and an efficient consumer rights body, huge discounts to be announced during Ramadan are not likely to provide the much needed relief to consumers. The government decision to drop diesel prices by Rs 8.5 per liter and compressed natural gas by Rs 9 per kg must have brought down transportation cost, but consumers have yet to see its impact on prices.

In the absence of strict implementation of price lists issued by the local authorities on a fortnightly basis, manufacturers and traders continued to increase the prices of groceries in March and April, providing different reasons for it. A manufacturer said that the increasing cost of imported raw material due to a 10 per cent devaluation of the rupee against the dollar over the past one year had neutralized the cut in transportation charges.

- Perhaps black tea is the only item whose price has dropped recently due to an 11 per cent cut in its sales tax. In the 2012-13 budgets, the sales tax was reduced from 16 to five per cent, causing black tea prices to drop by Rs 50-60 a kilo. But it is worth noting that tea packers had raised the prices in March 2012
- While flour is another basic commodity whose wholesale price has been slashed by millers in June from Rs 30.50 to Rs 29 a kilo, retailers still maintained the old price of Rs 33-34 per kilo of 2.5-quality flour

A pre-Ramadan price survey shows that there is virtually no respite for consumers in pulses owing to retailers' huge profit making as compared to low wholesale prices. For example:

- Gram pulse is being sold at Rs 120-130 a kilo though its wholesale rate is Rs 92-95. In June 2011, it was sold at Rs 73 a kilo
- Mash wholesale rate hovers between Rs 82 and Rs 84 a kilo, but retailers are charging between Rs 120 and Rs140. In June 2011, it was sold between Rs 135 and Rs 143 a kilo
- Masoor is available at Rs 64 a kilo at the wholesale market but retailers are compelling consumers to pay between Rs 80 and Rs 120 a kilo. In June 2011, it was sold between Rs 84 and Rs 90 a kilo
- Good quality Arhar's wholesale rate is Rs 132 a kilo but it is being sold up to Rs 160 a kilo. Last year it was sold between Rs 127 and Rs 144 a kilo
- Retailers are demanding between Rs 122 and Rs 140 for a kilo of Moong though it is available at the wholesale market at Rs108 a kilo. Its last year's retail price was between Rs 135 and Rs 148 a kilo
- Sugar's wholesale price is quoted as Rs51.50 a kilo but retailers are demanding up to Rs55. Last year it was available in retail at Rs70 a kilo

- Consumers are paying Rs75 for one liter pack of milk in June 2012 which after an increase of Rs10 in May 2012 is now tagged at Rs90
- Fresh milk now sells at Rs75 a liter while it was quoted as Rs68 a liter last year. Retailers raised the price by Rs5 in April 2012
- In Nido brand, consumers faced a jerk in April 2012 when the price of its one-kilo pack was raised from Rs560 to Rs590. In June 2011, it was sold at Rs520
- In March 2012, the price of Everyday tea whitener was raised from Rs500 to Rs540. In June 2011, it was sold at Rs450
- Branded ghee and cooking oil makers completely ignored the falling prices of palm oil in world markets. Instead they raised the prices
- Dalda's five liter cooking oil and five kg ghee tin is sold at Rs1, 110 as compared to Rs995 in February 2012. In June 2011, it was sold at Rs975

Discount schemes are likely to be announced during Ramadan after the rates were increased in recent months.

- Companies selling 16-litre cooking oil tin and 16-kg ghee change the prices almost daily in view of fluctuation in rates of palm oil in world markets. Retailers say that many companies have increased the prices by Rs4 a liter ahead of Ramadan
- The prices of mutton hovers between Rs550 and Rs600 a kilo as compared to Rs480 and Rs520 a kilo in June last year. Beef with and without bones is now available at Rs300-Rs320 and Rs370-Rs400 a kilo as compared to Rs270-Rs280 and Rs330-Rs340 a kilo, respectively

The News – July 09, 2012

Plans for Food Security Index

The government is expected to establish a food security index (FSI) for closer monitoring of indicators having impact on food security because of a correlation between high food prices and rise in poverty. The current system of weekly or monthly monitoring of prices of essential commodities through sensitive, wholesale and consumer price indicators could not capture the trend leading to shortage or surplus of food items and resultant prices of the items. The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) normally depict the price situation on the ground, but most of the time when products and commodities are already sold. He said the FSI would be a futuristic index which could guide the policymakers to take steps to protect people from volatile food supplies and prices. The FSI has been conceived on the advice of a defunct task force on food security led by former finance minister Sartaj Aziz. A task force had been formed by former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani in the first year of PPP government but its recommendations gathered dust in the planning commission for more than three years. Now these recommendations are being considered at the fag end of the government's five-year tenure. The official said the key finding of the report required an average agricultural growth rate of at least four per cent a year until 2020 (from the existing rate of two to three per cent) to ensure adequate supply of food and evolve an equitable system of grain procurement, storage and distribution so that food products and commodities were available at affordable prices. Officials said the food security index would be established by the Agriculture Policy Institute of the Ministry of Food Security and research that would also be responsible for updating the index on a regular basis and submit biannual reports to the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) so that pre-emptive and forward-looking policies could be put in place ahead of major food challenges. The task force had noted that the terms of trade of agriculture, defined as a ratio of output prices to input prices, constitute one of the most important elements for determining profitability of the agriculture sector and influencing supply responses. Generally, favorable terms of trade during the 1990s contributed to the

buoyancy of the sector and improved food security while the last decade, specifically between 2000 and 2007, saw a worsening of the terms of trade and a corresponding slowdown in the rate of agriculture growth from 4.6 per cent in the 1990s to less than three per cent. Agricultural credit formed about 21 per cent of the GDP but received only four per cent of total institutional credit which needed to be increased gradually.

The task force advised bridging the yield gap and diversifying the agriculture sector towards high value crops (horticulture, oil seeds and pulses etc) as accelerated growth could stimulate economic recovery and provide a basis for faster growth, once the global recession ends. Some of these crops would also need improved post-harvest handling like refrigerated transportation, storage and marketing through cool chains in the public-private partnership.

Dawn – July 14, 2012

Rates of daily-use items skyrocket as Ramadan begins

As the holy month of Ramadan has started, the rates of daily-use items have experienced an upward trend and the genie of price hike has come out. The prices of essential commodities had already gone up before the start of Ramadan. The prices of all basic commodities, including vegetables and fruits, have witnessed an increase of up to 50 percent, further burdening the already troubled common man. Traditionally, fruits and vegetable prices at the advent of the holy month of Ramadan go spiraling high by 50 to 100 percent. Prices of more than 25 daily-use commodities like sugar, rice, pulses, chicken, beef, mutton, vegetables and fruits have gone up in local markets. Nowadays, wholesalers and retailers, particularly of fruits and vegetables, are enjoying a freehand to fleece customers in the holy month despite all the claims of the authorities concerned. The price of sugar has already been raised by Rs 2 to Rs 3 per kg. Dates are available for Rs 100 to Rs 200 per 500 grams, while chicken is being sold at around Rs 360 to Rs 380 per kg. Gram flour, which is regularly used in Ramadan for making pakoras for Iftar, is being sold at Rs 110 to Rs 130 per kg. Yogurt is being sold at Rs 75 to Rs 90 per kg, while the price of milk is between Rs 65 and Rs 75 per liter. Instead of being honest and helpful in the holy month, retailers are exploiting the public in Ramadan. The scene was no different at the Sunday Bazaars, where the prices of vegetables and fruits continued to show an upward trend. Prices had been increasing continuously for the last two weeks with no one to control them.

Daily Times - July 23, 2012

'Sasta bazaars': High prices, low quality of items keeping buyers away

Low quality and high prices are keeping buyers away from the sasta bazaars (special markets) set up by the city government at different points to provide essential commodities at subsidized rates during the fasting month. Only a handful of buyers have been seen at these bazaars, ironically due to the relatively high rates of fruits and other edible commodities there. Shoppers seldom visit the special markets. The difference in rates seems to be too insignificant to attract the buyers for the satisfaction of the stallholders. The stallholders were assured of good sales, but the first two days of the holy month has shown a discouraging response from buyers. Commodity rates are less than that of the open market, but the difference was not enough to encourage buyers to go out of the way and visit the temporary facilities. The prices for onions, potatoes and some other vegetables are a bit lower in the sasta bazaars, but the quality of the commodities is not as good as in the open market. On the other hand, vendors had their own issues. They say that the rates at the temporary facilities were being kept low but the bazaars were not placed in locations that would to attract buyers. The head of the district administration also warned them not to sell fruits and vegetables at inflated rates and urged consumers to file

complaints against anyone charging inflated rates so that proper action could be taken against them.

The Express Tribune - July 23, 2012

Sale Of Unhygienic Food On The Rise In Twin Cities

With the advent of Ramadan, the use of substandard cooking oil and ghee for frying edibles is going on unchecked, putting people's health at risk in the twin cities. Most vendors fry edibles in used oil and do not change it despite using it for many days. It is observed that many vendors and shopkeepers mix new oil in the already used oil, which is a very dangerous practice. The consumers of these fried items have demanded the authorities concerned stop this practice by vendors. It is also a matter of concern that these items are prepared in unhygienic conditions. Most people in this business do not adopt any measure to maintain the quality of oils; instead they overuse these frying oils. A large number of vendors and shopkeepers are selling unhygienic food, drinks and beverages that are causing various diseases among the residents of the twin cities. Most of the stalls of chana chaat, fruit chaat, cold drinks and other eatables, set up particularly at roadsides and in streets, are selling unhygienic food items. The residents urged the authorities to take notice of the situation. When contacted, an official of the food quality control claimed that crackdowns were conducted regularly on violators and strict action was taken in this regard. He said the authorities would not allow anyone to play with the health of people. He said that special teams had been monitoring sales points and would fine those selling unhygienic food items and beverages.

Daily Times - July 26, 2012
